

# ARMIES OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE 1775-1820



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## Dedication

For Antoinette  
and the young ladies of Our Lady's Convent School, Loughborough  
*While Fates permit us let's be merry,  
Pass all we must the fatal ferry;  
And this our life too whirls away  
With the rotation of the day.*  
'To Enjoy the Time,' by Robert Herrick (1591-1674)

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## Publisher's Note

Readers may wish to study this title in conjunction with the following Osprey publications:  
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MAA 259 *The Mamluks*  
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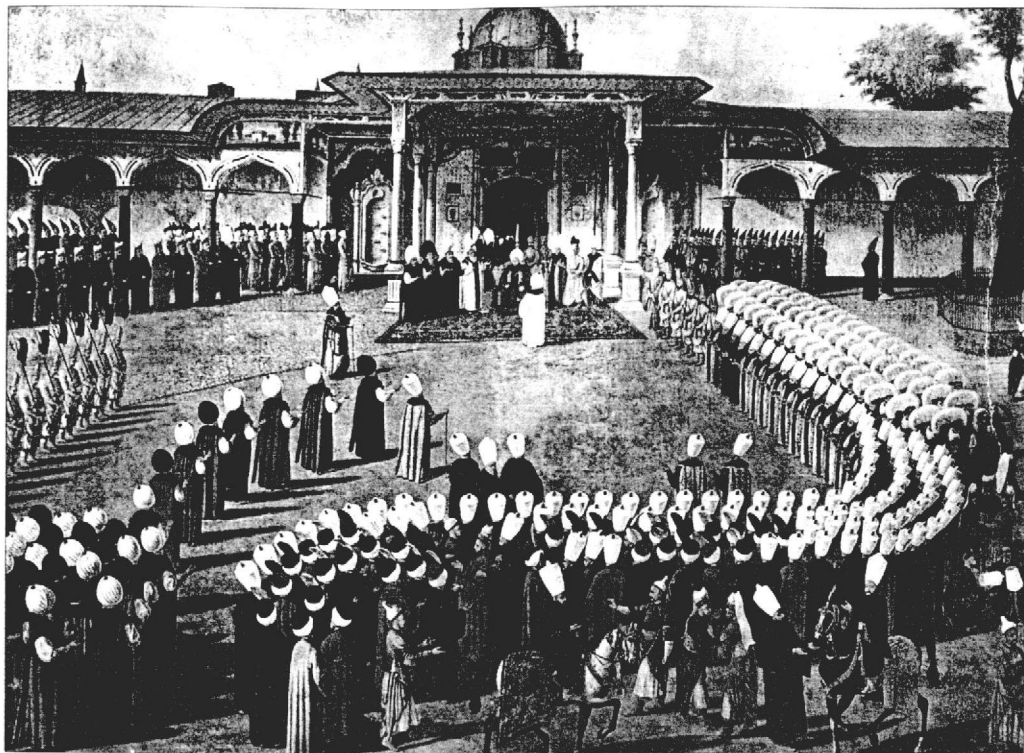
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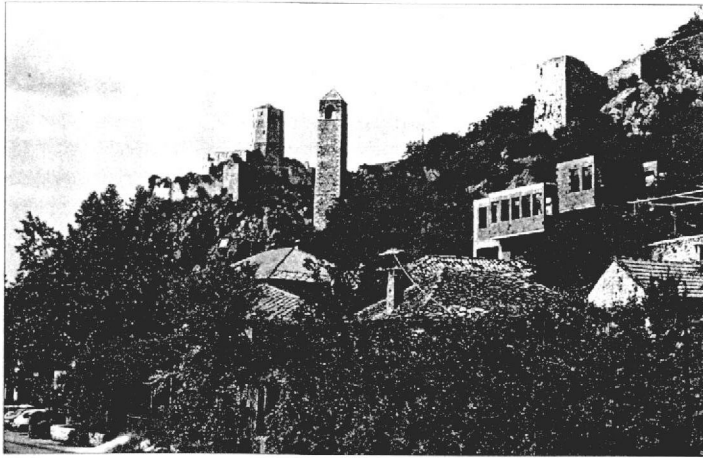
# ARMIES OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE 1775-1820

## INTRODUCTION

At the close of the 18th century the Ottoman Empire still had huge military potential. It was a complex structure of military provinces, autonomous regions and virtually independent 'regencies'. Each province had a governor or *paşa*, with a large staff including numerous military figures. This local administration was primarily concerned with the Muslim population, while the Christian communities governed themselves – unless their affairs impinged upon those of the Ottoman state itself. Some regions were of greater military significance than others, and most of these were on the frontiers. They included the Danube valley which had served as a major channel for Ottoman raids into central Europe and now formed a vulnerable opening where the Christian Habsburg Empire (later known as Austria-Hungary) could

Sultan Selim III receiving an ambassador at the 'Gate of Happiness' in the Topkapi Palace. This anonymous painting illustrates the formal nature of the Ottoman court and the uniformed costumes worn by all those present. (Topkapi Saray Museum, Istanbul, Turkey)





Today the village of Pocitelj stands next to the frontier between Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. During the Napoleonic Wars it was the Ottoman border town facing Venetian (subsequently French) Dalmatia. The existing fortifications, like the church tower and a mosque hidden behind the trees, are largely Ottoman. (Author's photograph)

invade Ottoman territory. Several outlying regions had, however, been lost since the high point of Ottoman power in the 16th-17th centuries. Nevertheless the massive loss of territory which characterised the final century of Ottoman history had barely begun.

The main problem which the Ottoman government currently faced was the refusal of many provincial authorities to obey the sultan, widespread though small-scale revolts,

and a steep economic decline which undermined the government's ability to finance military campaigns. Despite all these problems, however, Ottoman forces continued to fight hard and often well. But the impoverishment of the established military groups meant that a large proportion had to find additional means of making a living, while many became so desperate that they turned bandit. Paradoxically perhaps, these same bandit groups would also provide the Ottomans with some of their most effective troops before fundamental military reforms produced a 'modern' army in the 19th century. In fact the survival of the Ottoman state during these difficult decades, and in the face of predatory Christian neighbours, showed its basic strength.

Military men still formed a social élite and the Turks themselves regarded soldiering as the finest possible career. The Ottoman army continued to fulfil its traditional jobs of border defence, quelling uprisings and providing a mobile field force against foreign invasion. The army was also designed to neutralise its own often bitterly antagonistic rival elements. Ceremonial military costume, weaponry and decorated horse-harness also continued to play a prominent role in such Ottoman cultural life. Even so, there is no denying that the Ottoman armies were at their least effective in the late 18th century. They still consisted of *kapıkulu*, salaried regular troops, most of whom were Janissaries, and a huge variety of *topraklı*, unpaid irregulars. A large part of the Janissary corps was out of government control and was unwilling to accept modernisation of its structure, tactics or weaponry. The old feudal Sipahi cavalry had virtually ceased to exist as a military force, largely having evolved into a peaceful rural aristocracy. Technical corps such as the artillery were in better condition since they had accepted some degree of modernisation during the 18th century, whereas the Ottoman navy was in the worst shape of all.

The Ottoman Empire was only capable of raising 30,000 troops for a major campaign. Consequently, the Ottoman army relied on defensive strategy and lost the military initiative. These weaknesses had long been recognised by the sultan, but the question of whether a cure lay in bringing Ottoman forces back to their original condition or by a

wholesale adoption of western European military systems would remain unanswered until the destruction of the Janissary corps in 1826. It was also difficult to reform the military while the state was at war, as the Ottoman Empire was on and off throughout the Napoleonic era.

Of all the Ottomans' neighbours, Tsarist Russia was the most predatory. It wanted control of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits and intended to dominate the Orthodox Christian Balkans. Meanwhile, Napoleon saw Ottoman territories as the route to British-ruled India. Britain itself feared both Russian control of the Dardanelles and French influence in the Middle East, and consequently tended to support the Ottoman Empire.

## THE PEOPLE OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The Ottoman Empire had a larger population than its land could actually support which resulted in bloated cities, migration to underpopulated mountain regions, widespread banditry and piracy. It also meant that Ottoman armies had a ready pool of military manpower.

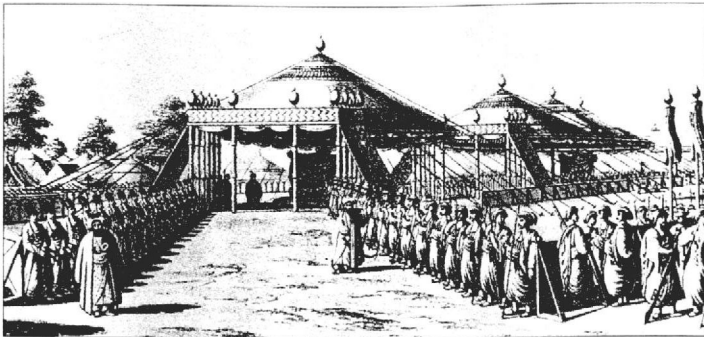
Within Ottoman Europe there were Muslim majorities in Albania, Bosnia, Hercegovina, Crete, parts of Bulgaria and most of the cities. The Muslim population was, however, in relative decline because it suffered disproportionately high military casualties in a state where, officially, only Muslims served in the army. Christian expansion was also turning the Muslims into a threatened, though socially dominant, élite. Furthermore, recent Ottoman military defeats had witnessed an alarming new phenomenon; namely the wholesale slaughter of Muslim populations in lost territories. Such 'ethnic cleansing' had not been seen before, but was to remain a feature of most Christian Balkan 'national liberation' movements down to the present day.

The Muslim population of the Ottoman Empire was largely of the Sunni persuasion, although there were large Shia minorities in eastern Anatolia, Syria and Iraq. Non-Muslims were members of one of the *milletts* or largely autonomous communities into which the entire Ottoman population was divided; such as the Armenian Christians, Orthodox Christians, Catholic Christians, and Jews. In rural regions these non-Muslim populations were ruled by their own 'notables' who

were responsible for law and order and also for relations with the Muslim élite.

Greek Christians enjoyed a culturally and even a politically privileged position compared to the others, but the Western European visitor tended to be dismissive of these fellow Christians, and generally advocated alliance with the dominant Turks.

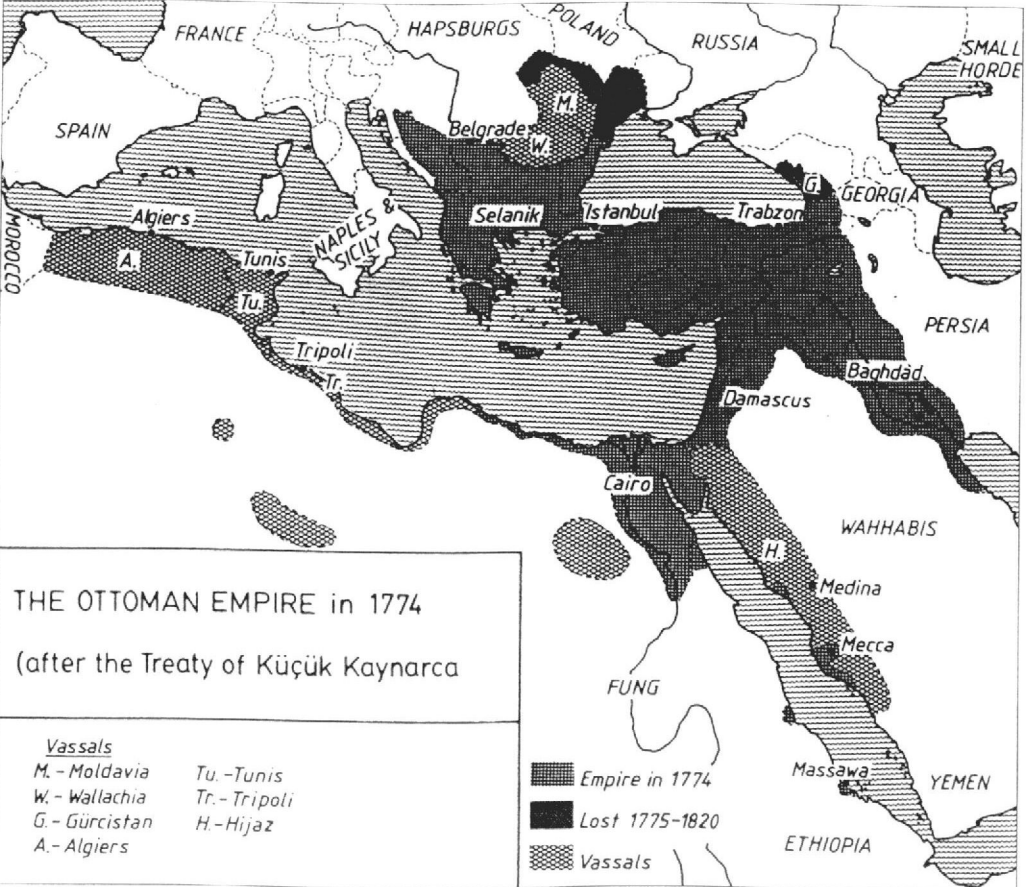
The ceremonial tents of the Vizier Davut Paşa on campaign against the Russians and Austro-Hungarians in the Balkans, 1788. (Aquatint by W. Watts, after a drawing by Luigi Mayer, Bib. Nat. Dep. d'Estampes, Paris, France)



Visiting Western soldiers and diplomats had a clear appreciation of Ottoman military strengths and weaknesses. General Koehler, the principal adviser to the traditional corps, told his superiors in London that their leaders showed no foresight in operations against the enemy and wrote: 'What is expected from such troops, or rather mob thus commanded? Nothing but shame and disgrace, and yet they have fine men, excellent horses, good guns, plenty of ammunition, and provisions, and forage, and in short great abundance of all the materials required to constitute a fine army, but they want order and system, which would not be difficult to establish if their principal officers were not so astonishingly adverse to anything tending towards it.'

In fact, the Turks and many of their Muslim subjects remained excellent military material. Confident, aggressive and motivated by religious certainty, their highly traditional attitude towards warfare was illustrated in a little-known poem by Wasif commemorating a defeat of the French in 1801:

When the misbelieving Frenchman suddenly swooped on Egypt's land,



Thither was the army's sent by the Great Sultan's  
 command;  
 But soon the foe o'erthrew and defeated his luckless  
 band.  
 Then you went and scattered the vile foe on every  
 hand,  
 When they your lightning, life-consuming,  
 cannon scanned,  
 The hell-doomed misbelievers knew the vanity  
 of all they'd planned.  
 Countless foemen your happy officers did  
 withstand,  
 Three full years, day and night, they fought  
 you brand to brand.  
 Wretched, they fell at your feet and mercy did  
 demand.  
 You do deserve in glory so to stand!  
 Bravo! Champion of the Age! Rending ranks  
 in serried fight!  
 Now your sabre hangs o'er the fire, sparkling  
 like the stars at night!

Soldiers would face extraordinary odds to earn a *çelenk* or jewelled decoration given by the sultan for courage in the face of a superior enemy. Perhaps as a result the archaic Ottoman armies won several victories against much stronger foes during the era of the French Revolutionary Wars.



**Ottoman Fragmentation**

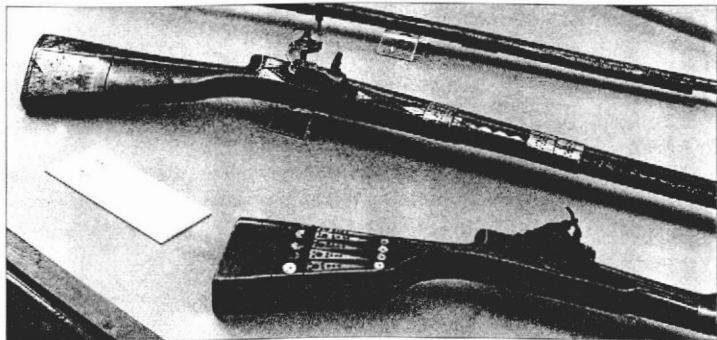
As the sultan's authority declined, local Muslim 'notables' rose to power in many provinces. They also assembled private armies which were often more numerous, better paid and better equipped than those of the official Ottoman governors. Some of these *ayans* established highly effective regimes with loyal support from the local population. Ottoman regular troops were similarly thin on the ground in autonomous parts of the Balkans such as Wallachia and Moldavia (modern Romania). Within Anatolia the sultan controlled only a few provinces, the rest having been in a greater or lesser state of rebellion for decades. As one visitor said: 'It is governed by independent *Ağas*, or Chiefs of Districts; revolted from oppression, every man asserting and maintaining his own... and defending his estates with resolution and effect. In the exigencies of war they have made common cause with the state; they have contributed a quote of men to the war; but upon no account have they suffered *Paşas* or officers of authority to come amongst them to govern.'

Much the same was true of the Arab-speaking areas, though the situation in Egypt was different. Here a revival of Mamluk power had resulted in the 'Neo-Mamluk Household System'. Substantial military forces dominated Egypt when the French invaded in 1798. Ottoman authority was yet more nominal in the autonomous North African regencies – Tripoli, Tunis and Algiers, left to their own devices as long as they recognised the sultan and contributed fleets to his navy.

A *serdenceği ağası* or platoon commander of the 'Head Sacrificer' élite Janissary assault troops. This painting forms part of a collection of an album on Ottoman costumes produced by Fenerci Mehmed between 1815 and 1825. (Rahmi M. Koç Coll., Istanbul, Turkey)

## CHRONOLOGY

- 1774 Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca ends Ottoman-Russian war; Abdulhamit I becomes sultan.
- 1775 Ottomans cede Bukovina to Habsburgs; defeat of Spanish invasion of Algeria.
- 1783 Eastern Georgia passes from Persian to Russian suzerainty.
- 1787-92 Ottoman-Russian war: Ottomans encourage anti-Russian risings in Caucasus.
- 1788 Habsburgs attack Ottoman Empire as ally of Russia.
- 1789 Selim III becomes sultan.
- 1791 Peace of Svishtov ends Ottoman-Habsburg war and re-establishes borders of 1788.
- 1792 Peace of Iași ends Ottoman-Russian war, and River Nistru (Dniester) becomes new border; Spanish evicted from Oran in Algeria.
- 1797 France annexes Venetian Ionian islands.
- 1798 French invade Ottoman Egypt; Ottomans form alliance with Britain and Russia; joint Russian and Ottoman fleet takes Ionian islands from French; Ali Paşa of Janina takes Preveza, Vónitsa and Butrint from French.
- 1799 Napoleon invades Palestine, and is defeated at Acre (23 March-21 May); Napoleon returns to France leaving army in Egypt.
- 1800 French defeat Ottoman attempt to retake Egypt.
- 1800-6 Ottoman campaigns against Wahhabi fundamentalists in Arabia and rebels in Syria.
- 1801 French evacuate Egypt.
- 1802 Peace of Amiens ends French-Ottoman war.
- 1803-05 Americans blockade Tripoli (Libya).
- 1804 Start of Serbian revolt.
- 1806 Ottomans join France in war against Russia and Britain; Russians invade Ottoman territory; Serbian rebels take Belgrade.
- 1807 British fleet penetrates Dardanelles but retreats with loss; British invasion of Egypt is defeated at Rashid; Sultan Selim III overthrown by military revolt, replaced by Mustafa IV; Ottoman navy breaks Russian blockade of Dardanelles.
- 1808 Sultan Mustafa IV overthrown, replaced by Mahmud II.
- 1809 Ottoman offensive against rebel Serbs.



Late-18th-century Turkish flintlock muskets. The mechanism is simple and sturdy, while the triggers lack guards, like earlier Turkish matchlock muskets. (Author's photograph; Askeri Müzesi, Istanbul, Turkey)



- 1812 Treaty of Bucharest ends Russian-Ottoman war, Ottomans cede Bessarabia (Moldova) to Russia; Paşa of Algiers declares war on USA.
- 1812-17 Sultan's authority reimposed on most of Anatolia.
- 1814 Renewed Serbian revolt.
- 1815 Ottoman authorities negotiate Serbian autonomy; Americans defeat Algerian fleet.
- 1815-20 Ottoman authority reimposed on most of Syria.
- 1820-23 Ottoman Empire defeated in war with Persia.
- 1821 Start of Greek revolt in the Peloponnese and Aegean islands.

## RECRUITMENT AND RANKING

The French artist Jean Brindisi produced a large series of Ottoman costume prints in the 1820s, including uniforms and ceremonial dress from many years earlier. This picture shows, from left to right: a *çuhadar*, or government representative of the Janissary Corps, a *divan çavuşu*, the official responsible for maintaining order during government sessions, and a Janissary auxiliary responsible for guarding foreign embassies.



Ottoman armies consisted of salaried *kapıkulu* regulars, *topraklı* regional irregulars, short-term levies called *miri-askeris*, *yerli neferats* consisting of the entire Muslim population of a town called up for local defence, and the *gönüllüyan*, a general mass of tribal irregulars. Most officers lacked formal training and many had simply purchased their ranks. Western visitors were astonished that a man could buy weapons and simply declare himself to be a soldier by registering with a Janissary regiment, attaching himself to a senior officer, or joining the armed following of a provincial leader. The fact that the man could just as easily declare himself no longer a soldier, and leave without criticism, caused even more amazement. Foreigners also found it hard to distinguish between true Janissaries and their *yamaks*, or auxiliaries, many of whom were mercenaries who carried out the Janissaries' military duties.

They could change their *orta*, or regiment, whenever they wished. A growing community of interest between provincial garrisons and local merchants or artisans meant that locals enlisted in Janissary ranks as a form of protection and to enjoy the privileges associated with the military élite. The same was true of other garrison regiments, such as the *azaps*. A very different situation existed in North Africa. Here the Janissaries of, for example, Algiers remained first-generation volunteers from Turkey or the Balkans

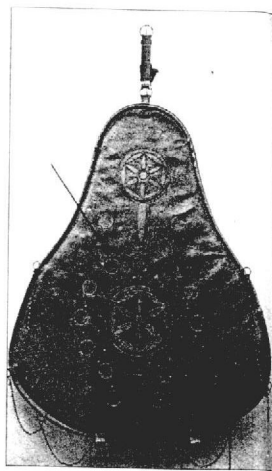
As the Janissaries declined in effectiveness, so other infantry formations arose. Troops raised by other provincial governors tended to be called *sıratkulu* and included pioneers, miners and *hisarlıs* who helped the garrison artillery. The Albanians also achieved a military prominence not seen at any other period in Albanian history. Other Ottoman soldiers of this period came from very varied backgrounds. A considerable increase in the trans-Saharan slave trade meant that black African soldiers of slave origin formed the bodyguard of the *Beys* of Tripoli in Libya. Many came from the same parts of West Africa as slaves shipped across the Atlantic, though of course

their prospects were vastly better than in the American plantations. Even less well known is the fact that some white slaves of European origin were exported in the opposite direction, from Ottoman North Africa to Muslim states south of the Sahara. Many Balkan soldiers served in Habsburg or Russian armies before returning to Ottoman territory with experience of 'modern' warfare.

The recruitment of Ottoman cavalry was less clear, since the old feudal Sipahis had largely been replaced by salaried regulars and Deli volunteers. The recruitment of Mamluks was very different, both in Egypt and in the few other places where cavalry of slave origin still played a role. The basic system of importing such slaves was, however, the same as it had been in the later Middle Ages (see MAA 259: *The Mamluks 1250-1517*). Most Mamluks were still of Georgian or Circassian origin, though Mamluk ranks now included free-born Kurds, Bosnians, Albanians, Anatolian Turks, a few converted Armenians and Jews, as well as some converted western European prisoners-of-war. In addition to soldiers of slave or captive origin, Mamluk leaders hired mercenaries, including foreign specialists, and low-status *Saraçıs* or 'saddlers' who supposedly included Egyptian Christians masquerading as Muslims.

The little that is known about recruitment for the technical corps, such as artillery and mortar men, indicates that a large proportion came from Bosnia and other Balkan Muslim populations, from ex-Sipahi cavalrymen who had lost their fiefs during various reforms, and from hired foreign mercenaries. The Ottoman navy had traditionally relied on non-combatant Christian sailors, with gunners and marines recruited from Turkish and other Muslim coastal populations. Prior to the ethnic cleansing of the 19th century the Greek islands and particularly Crete were, of course, home to substantial Muslim communities.

European mercenaries included extraordinary adventurers. British officers aboard a ship off the Anatolian coast in 1801 were astonished when a white bearded old 'Turk' climbed aboard and started speaking Gaelic to some Highland troops. He had fled to the Ottoman Empire around 1760, having killed a man in a duel, then joined the sultan's army where he rose to the rank of artillery general. This was probably İngiliz Mustafa, born Campbell, who together with a Frenchman named Aubert continued reforms to the *Süratçı* 'Rapid Fire' Artillery Corps established by the Franco-Hungarian Baron François de Tott in the 1770s. On the other side of the Mediterranean, the Bey of Tripoli's chamberlain was a Russian renegade, and the commander of Tripoli's fleet was Peter Lyle who had jumped ship from the British navy. The designer of Algiers' new harbour defences was the ex-Swedish consul Schultze, and one of the *Dey* of Algiers' best cannon-makers was François Dupont, late of the French king's artillery. Muhammad Ali the new governor of Egypt was the most enthusiastic military moderniser in the Ottoman Empire and he also enlisted



Late 18th-early 19th century padded leather archery target used by Sipahi cavalry during training. (Author's photograph: Askeri Müzesi, Istanbul, Turkey)

BELOW French watercolour painting of Ottoman uniforms in Egypt or Syria, c.1800. Left and centre: senior Janissary officers; right: *Deli* auxiliary cavalryman from the rear. (Bib. Nat., Dep. d'Estampes, Paris, France)



westerners, including some captured during his remarkable defeat of the British invasion of 1807.

### Ranking Structure

Titles could have different meaning in different areas or types of unit. Basically, however, ranks ran as follows:

#### Administrative officers:

Nazır	Supervisor of a corps,
Ağa	Commander of a regiment or large unit,
Kethüda	Lieutenant or assistant to a commanding officer,
Kethüda Yeri	Executive Officer,
Kâtib	Chief Scribe,
Çavuş Başı	Sergeant-major,
Kapu Çukadar	Chief Orderly.

#### Operational officers:

Çorbacı	Colonel,
Odabaşı	Colonel's assistant,
Vekilharç	Commissary,
Bayraktar	Standard Bearer,
Aşçı Başı	Chief Cook,
Saki	Water Bearer

These last three were middle-ranking field officers. There were also various *mülâzim* and *kullukçu*, junior officers or orderlies, and the *çavus* (sergeant or disciplinary officer).

Each squad of men was commanded by a *ser bölük* or *bölükbaşı* (corporal or junior NCO). Promotion was strictly by seniority within the existing ranks.

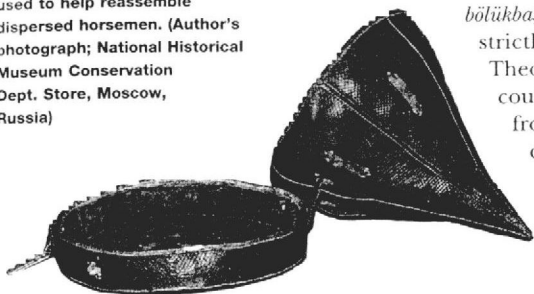
Theoretically, only officers above the rank of *çorbacı* could marry. Each unit also had apprentices, usually from amongst the sons of men already in that corps, who learned the trade while helping with equipment and animals. Each *oçak* (corps) was divided into *orta* (regiments), these being subdivided into *bölük* (squads).

## TRADITIONAL FORCES

### Infantry

The weaknesses of the Ottoman army during these decades may have been exaggerated. Certainly Ottoman forces were successful in ambush and small-scale counterattacks, and Western advisers advocated defensive guerrilla campaigns, making full use of mountainous terrain and avoiding open battle. As a result, several invading forces were divided, harassed and defeated in detail. Ottoman infantry and cavalry scattered in the face of artillery bombardment but were able to reassemble very quickly, even in broken terrain. During an attack the infantry advanced in groups of 40 to 50, one rank or group advancing and firing while the second reloaded, maintaining their steady advance and in the face of considerable losses. The final charge would then be made without support or reserves. Cavalry played a minimal role and fortifications increased in importance, ranging from small wooden *palankas*

Leather case to hold a small drum which would have been attached to the front of a cavalry officer's or NCO's saddle and used to help reassemble dispersed horsemen. (Author's photograph; National Historical Museum Conservation Dept. Store, Moscow, Russia)



to the main frontier fortresses where Ottoman architects used western theories of military architecture. These were strengthened during the early years of Sultan Mahmut II's reign, and new corps of frontier guards were created.

The Janissaries remained both the Ottoman Empire's most important infantry corps, and its greatest military weakness. Apart from a handful of élite regiments around Istanbul and in a few provincial capitals, the Janissaries had virtually no formal training.

Estimates of the size of the Janissary corps varied enormously. Around 1790 12,000 were registered in the Istanbul army lists, though only 2,000 were expected to serve in combat. Twenty years later, 13,000 of them reported for duty, but only 1,600 were still with the colours when the army reached Edirne, 220 kilometres away. Others estimated the total number of Janissaries in the Ottoman Empire at 150,000, while one foreign observer believed that there were up to 400,000 Janissaries of whom 50,000 might appear when summoned to the colours. In Syria the descendants of earlier Janissary garrisons had been assimilated into the local population: The same was true in Iraq and Egypt, though here more recently arrived Janissaries were not yet assimilated.

The structure of the Janissary corps remained essentially the same as it had been in the days of greatness (see Elite 58: *The Janissaries*), efforts to modernise the corps having failed. Some *orta* (regiments) had won the right to certain traditional duties, such as guarding foreign embassies, policing Istanbul harbour and customs houses, or acting as a fire-brigade. In Cairo some of the great Citadel towers were held by local Janissaries, while others were held by their bitter rivals, the *Azaps*. Despite their military ineffectiveness, these

Janissaries had an almost mystical view of their role as defenders of the Ottoman state, and this contributed to the vehemence with which they resisted reform. Even critical observers could not deny that the Janissaries had enormous *esprit de corps*, which manifested itself in strange ways. When a handful of younger soldiers dressed as women were called the 'harem', for example, they were placed in a separate tent and given a special guard. They served as a sort of regimental talisman and would be defended to the death in case of defeat.

In strictly military terms, the best Janissaries were brave, generally more intrepid and showed greater individual initiative than Western infantry. Most of their *tüfenk* (muskets) were matchlocks rather than the newer flintlocks. They took longer to reload but were larger, more accurate and had longer range than most Western muskets. The supposedly old-fashioned style of Ottoman infantry warfare should not, however, be taken too literally. The Balkan Janissaries had experience of facing 'western warfare' and were clearly not impressed. Their own traditions emphasised individual initiative and they regarded Western



Print by Jean Brindisi illustrating uniforms of the modernised Humbaracı Mortar Corps. Left to right: *Timarli*, supported by a government fief or estate, *Ulufeli*, paid directly by the state, *Timarli Subayi*, or officer.

infantry almost as mindless automatons, lacking prowess and honour. Janissaries particularly objected to the bayonet which they saw as a perversion of the 'cold steel' ethic, forcing men to fight more like machines.

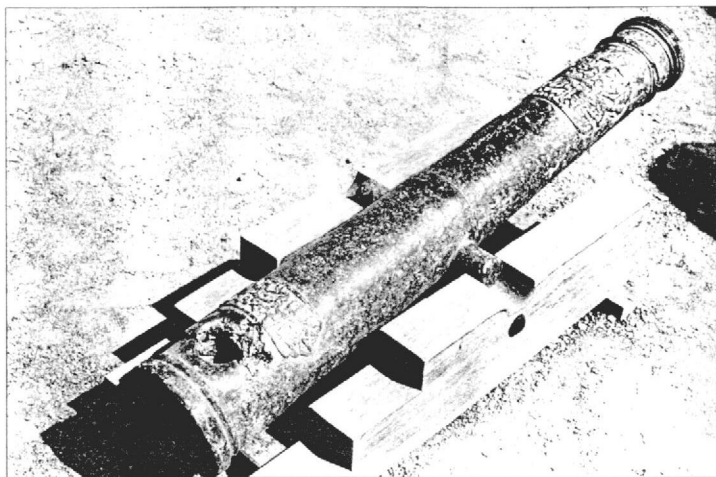
The *Bostancis* were another traditional Ottoman infantry corps who formed part of the *kapıkulu* salaried regulars. Their *orta* (regiments) were stationed around Istanbul and Edirne as an élite reserve, but they numbered only a few thousand and were almost as resistant to change as the Janissaries. The *Solaks* were an even smaller ceremonial guard for the sultan's palace.

The garrisons of the Bosphorus forts were increased in 1793-4, those on the Asian shore being placed under a *bogaz nazım*, or Bosphorus superintendent, while each fort was commanded by a *dizdar* or warden. The earlier *seğhans* had been incorporated into the Janissary corps while an entirely separate *seğhan* corps now served as a rural militia largely recruited from Anatolian Turkish peasants. The *tüfenkçis*, 'musketeers', were more like mounted infantry and were largely recruited from Kurds. The term *levend* or *levant*, was even less precise, being applied to bandits in the eastern provinces, to troops recruited from such outlaw groups, and also to some naval sailors. Local Balkan forces had also increased in importance. They included Bosnian *panduks* or *pandurs*, and *eflak* sharpshooters; the Muslim Bosnians having risen to military prominence even before the Muslim Albanians.

Irregular and semi-regular infantry equipped themselves according to their own preferences, resulting in colourful but not uniformed forces. Those from what might be called 'warrior populations' tended to be excellent marksmen, enterprising, aggressive and highly effective in forests, mountains and broken country particularly when cooperating with cavalry. The best Ottoman foot soldiers were, in fact, light infantry. So it is ironic that while the sultan was struggling to 'modernise' Ottoman armies by introducing western European line infantry, western European armies were re-introducing light infantry to offset the increasing firepower of a modern battlefield.

Traditionalist reforms by the Grand Viziers Gazi Hasan Paşa and Halil Hamit Paşa in the 1770s and 1780s had little impact. They focused on weeding out the corrupt or incapable, trying to make the men live in barracks and concentrate on their military duties. However, those purged often returned once the government inspectors had left. Selim III's subsequent reforms were more determined, but still attempted to recreate the idealised fighting force of an earlier age. The old or infirm were replaced by younger recruits, while

This bronze cannon in the fortress of Nizwa in Oman is a typically old fashioned piece of Ottoman or Persian artillery. (Author's photograph)



those attempting to send substitutes were expelled. Corrupt officers were dismissed, while new officers were offered only three-year commissions. Soldiers were ordered to wear uniforms at all times and to train every day except Tuesdays and Fridays. Food allowances increased according to rank, with the large amounts allocated to officers also being intended for his servants and orderlies. In an attempt to solve the problem of winter campaigns, when Janissaries were traditionally withdrawn from frontier garrisons while Sipahi cavalry went home to look after their estates, Sultan Selim tried to create two separate corps; that for summer warfare drawn from Anatolian cavalry, with a winter corps or standing reserve consisting of Balkan Janissaries. Selim also hoped to raise a Turkish infantry militia in Anatolia. It was the failure of such plans which finally led Selim to create an entirely new army: the *Nizam-ı Cedid*.

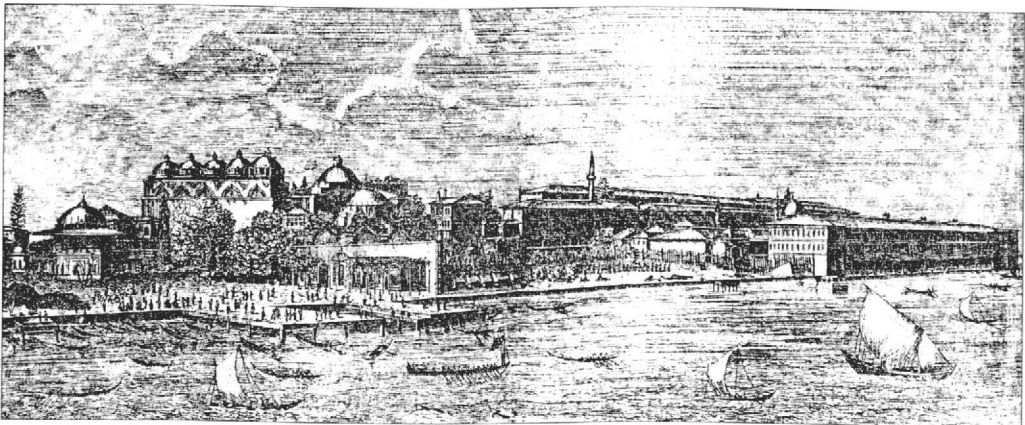
Following the overthrow of Selim III and the brief reactionary reign of Mustafa IV, Sultan Mahmut II allowed his Grand Vizier Bayraktar Mustafa Paşa to continue these reforms, but he failed too. Thereafter Sultan Mahmut concentrated on building up loyal but traditional formations which finally enabled him to destroy the entire Janissary system in what became known as the *Vakayı Hayriye* or 'Auspicious Event' in 1826.

### The Mehter

The *Mehterhane*, or military band corps, had long been a distinctive feature of the Ottoman army. In fact Turkish bands influenced the music of western Europe with tunes, 'alla Turca' being particularly popular in the 18th century. Around 1780 composers like Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven and Gluck tried to imitate what they called 'Janissary music.' Some Turkish instruments were also adopted, such as the Turkish Crescent or 'Jingling Johnnie', a version of the Ottoman *çevgân* with which the leader of a Mehter band kept time.

Wind instruments consisted of two kinds of seven-hole clarinet made from plum or apricot wood: the low pitched *kaba zurna* and the higher pitched *cura*. The *kurenay* or *boru* trumpet was a simple brass instrument for keeping rhythm, while *düdüğü* 'whistles' sometimes completed the wind section. *Nekhare*, doubled kettle-drums, *zıl* (cymbals), *davul* (two-

The modernised *Tophane* or Cannon Foundry with the barracks of the *Topçu Artillery* and *Top Arabacı Corps* to the right, as rebuilt at the beginning of the 19th century.



sided drums) and the massive *kös* bass drum formed the percussion, though the *kös* players were a separate musical organisation only employed by the sultan. There were, in fact, several sizes of *kös*; those carried on horseback, a middle-sized one for a camel and the largest mounted on an elephant, though all could be placed on the ground. *Çevkâni* – singers – were added to this traditional orchestra in the late 18th century.

Mehterhane bands normally stood in a crescent formation. The *kös* player stood slightly forward, like a star within this crescent. Before the band started to play a junior sergeant stepped forward and called: 'Attention! Mehterbaşı Ağa, it is time for happiness and fun,' while the *nekkare* played a three-time rhythmic drum-roll. The conductor and musicians saluted each other before the former told the audience what his Mehter were going to perform. The concert then began with the Mehterbaşı shouting 'Haydi, yallah! – Attention, let's go!'

Most performances consisted of battle-songs and marches, but also included the music of Sufi mystics or dervishes. In addition to their distinctive music, the Mehter also had its own form of marching which was almost a dance-step with the rhythm 1, 2, 3–4, 1, 2, 3–4, right-left-right-pause and half turn right-left-right-left-pause and half turn left, and so on with the accompanying chant '*Kerim-Allah-Eyisün, Rahim-Allali-Eyisün*'.



### Cavalry

Cavalry had been the most powerful element of the Ottoman army during its period of greatness. But by the late 18th century Ottoman cavalry were virtually irrelevant except in Egypt, some other Middle Eastern areas and North Africa. Those that still existed were light horse of the hussar type. They hovered around the infantry as a protective screen and carried out reconnaissance, but could rarely withstand a charge by heavier Western cavalry. Nevertheless, their willingness to charge over broken ground where Western cavalry dared not operate astonished many observers. The feudal Sipahis who had formed the élite of the old Ottoman armies had largely declined into a rural aristocracy of tax-farmers. Rather than trying to revive the Sipahis, military reformers looked for excuses to seize the remaining *Timar* fiefs to pay new infantry or artillery forces. Some remaining Sipahis became a small new force of *kapıkulu* salaried cavalry paid directly by the state.

One of the first attempted reforms was to ensure that Sipahis did not go home in winter without written permission from their *alay bey* or *sancak* – a district commander who had been voted into position by that district's fief holders. Early in Selim III's reign the empire supposedly had around 30,000 registered Sipahis, but only 2-3,000 appeared when

A Balkan regular infantryman, probably of Albanian origin, as shown in an English engraving of the Napoleonic period. His hat indicates that he is either a member of the old Bostancı corps or was from the new Nizam-ı Cedid. (Bib. Nat. Dep. d'Estampes, Paris, France)

mustered. Some reformers suggested that the Sipahi corps should be replaced by an entirely new force based upon the Deli irregular horse. Instead, Selim tried to return the Sipahis to their original 'pure' state, while trying to make them accept modern weapons. He also tried to improve the Sipahis' abilities by ordering that they come to Istanbul for instruction from Western advisers, mostly French, for six months training every two years. At first some Sipahis seemed to support this as a way of strengthening themselves in the face of local Janissaries who had been seizing Sipahis estates. But in general Selim's attempts to reform the feudal cavalry were as unsuccessful as his efforts to reform the Janissaries.

Regular or *kapıkulu* cavalry paid directly by the state had, of course, existed for centuries. But many *Kapıkulu* Sipahis had been obliged to leave their barracks in search of work to supplement salaries whose values were eroded by inflation. This was even more of a problem for cavalry than for infantry since the former also had to maintain horses. The sultan's supposedly elite *Silahtar* cavalry guard were in little better condition and their numbers were tiny. Yet by the end of Selim's reign a new force of around 10,000 paid troopers had been created which, with provincial horsemen sent by loyal governors, gave the Ottoman army the best cavalry it had seen in decades.

A large part of the irregular cavalry consisted of *Delis*, most of whom were recruited in the Balkans. Others came from anarchic Turkish and Kurdish regions of eastern Anatolia. Part of the higher status *Posta Tatarı*, or Tatar courier corps, were probably drawn from the *Delis*. This courier system was based on regional centres like Belgrade, and no foreigner was permitted to travel Ottoman roads without a Tatar escort.





LEFT A fortress has stood on the site of the Kalemegdan in Belgrade since pre-Roman times. Most of the existing inner structures date from Ottoman times. (Author's photograph)

## The Technical Corps

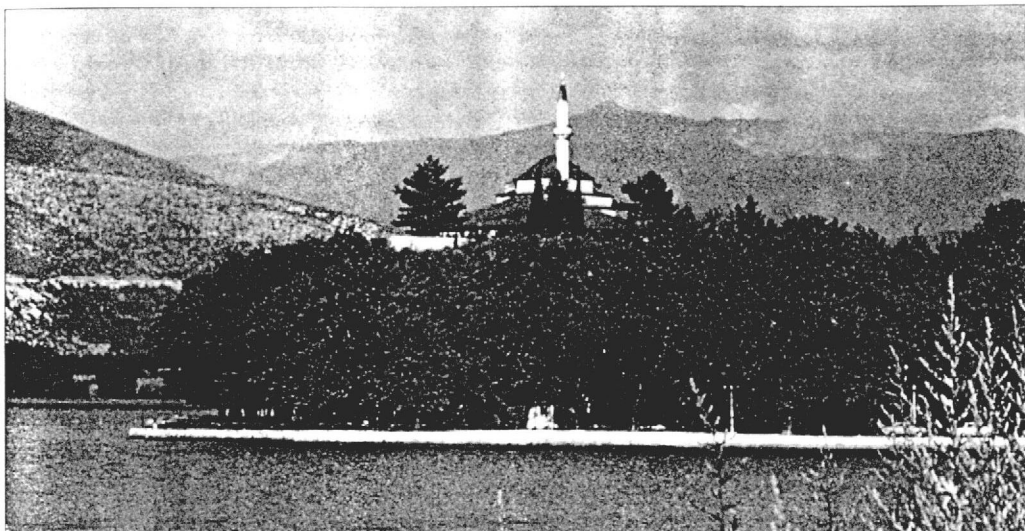
Late 18th-century Ottoman artillery was still basically the same as it had been a century earlier. Consequently, Ottoman cannon had a notably slower rate of fire than European weapons. Attempts to rectify this situation had limited results until more drastic measures were taken to improve the *Topçu Ocağı* (Artillery Corps) and *Humbaracı Ocağı* (Mortar Corps) in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, mostly under French guidance. The results were sometimes striking. In 1807, for example, a British fleet forced its way into the Sea of Marmara to threaten the Ottoman capital but then had to retreat through the Dardanelles Straits where ancient artillery pieces dating from the 15th century had meanwhile been strengthened by 306 cannon, 16 mortars and thousands of additional troops under the technical guidance of men from the French and Spanish embassies. The result was a close-run thing for the Royal Navy.

BELOW, LEFT Ali Paşa of Janina in old age. Though he remained nominally loyal to the sultan, Ali Paşa ruled his territories according to his own wishes and by so doing showed the Greek Christians that it was possible to defy the Ottoman Empire. (Print by Havell after a drawing by Cartwright, Bib. Nat. Dep. d'Estampes, Paris, France)

The schizophrenic attitude of the Ottoman élite towards Western technology was reflected in several stories concerning ballooning. In 1785 a 'Persian', or more likely 'Parisian', scientist reportedly ascended from Istanbul in a hot-air balloon with two members of the sultan's *Bostancı* guard as passengers, though this may have been a myth. In 1802 a British balloonist certainly sent up an unmanned balloon in the presence of Sultan Selim III; receiving a more enthusiastic response than did Napoleon's balloonists when they unsuccessfully tried to impress the people of Cairo some years earlier.

BELOW Ali Paşa's palace and the beautiful Mosque of Aslan Paşa stand within the fortifications of the Frourion which dominate a peninsula jutting out into Lake Pambotis. These defences were strengthened by Ali Paşa with French technical guidance in 1815. (Author's photograph)

The late 18th-century *Topçu Ocağı* (artillery corps) formed part of the *kapıkulu* salaried regular troops, consisting of around 30,000 men. A new *Süratçi Ocağı*, Rapid-Fire Field Artillery Corps, had been established in 1774 under the guidance of Baron de Tott, and was supported by a new cannon-foundry making modern gun-barrels. In 1782 foreign advisers were recalled, instruction manuals translated into Turkish, and the *Süratçi Ocağı* increased to 2,000 men with higher salaries. These reforms



An Albanian of the Janina region of what is now northern Greece. Most Albanians were Muslim and during the early 19th century they provided several Ottoman armies with their most effective infantry. (Print by Havell after a drawing by Cartwright, Bib. Nat. Dep. d'Estampes, Paris, France)



continued under Selim III. As a result Ottoman gunners had large *Sûrat* and small *Abus*, both of which were 'Western' cannon, while continuing to use traditional guns known as *Balyemez* and *Şahi*. The structure of the Artillery Corps was also streamlined; the number of regiments being increased, each with ten cannon (four *Sûrat*, two *Abus*, plus four older *Balyemez* and *Şahi*). *Balyemez* and *Şahi* were so difficult to move that they were usually placed in fixed emplacements while newer rapid-fire cannon changed position in battle. Consequently, their crews suffered high casualties and in 1796 ten infantry 'musketeers' were attached to each gun to protect the crew; these men were also given gunnery training to replace fallen gunners. Ten men allocated to each gun formed a *böyük*, with the most experienced acting as *top ustası* or cannon master, and next competent as his *yamak* or assistant. The senior *top ustası* commanded the regiment in battle, while the commander of the First Artillery Regiment served as Corps Commander. Thirty *mülazım* were attached to each regiment to replace men who fell, and a badge was allocated to each gun, with a copy sewn on to the crew's uniforms.

Garrisons of fortresses on the European side of the Bosphorus Straits were drawn from artillerymen, each under the command of a *top usta*, and were considered part of the *Nizam-ı Cedid*, the 'New Army' (see below). A comparable system seems to have been used in the fortresses of the Danube frontier. Under Sultan Mahmut II an entirely new formation of 1,000 mounted artillery was also created in western European style and, after suffering great losses against the Russians in 1812, was rebuilt as a loyal bodyguard for Mahmut.

The *Humbaracı Ocağı* Mortar Corps specialised in siege warfare, being responsible for mining and various fire weapons, as well as mortars. It had enjoyed particular attention during Sultan Selim III's first attempts at military reform, with advisers being recruited from France and Sweden. New barracks north of the Golden Horn also meant that the *Humbaracı Ocağı* at Hasköy were no longer dispersed among other corps. Under its new *Humbaracı Başı* (commander) the corps soon had 40 mortars, ten of each four calibres, plus ten *Abus* light field guns, each type of weapon supported by a company under a *ser halife*. The crew of one weapon was considered an *orta*, consisting of a *halife* (officer), nine gunners and nine *mülazım* apprentices. Two men from each crew were designated as wagoners. No member of this élite *Humbaracı Ocağı* was allowed to marry, being expected to remain in barracks, training all the time. Most were Bosnians, with some ex-Sipahi cavalry from Albania.

Reforms to the *Top Arabacı Ocağı* (Artillery Wagon Corps) began in 1793. Above all, Selim wanted to bring their barracks closer to those of the Artillery Corps and to improve co-operation between the two. Initially, the Artillery Wagon Corps consisted of five regiments with five men and a wagon being assigned to each artillery piece, but this proved inadequate so carpenters, locksmiths, saddlers and blacksmiths were recruited from the civilian population as part-timers.

The *Lağımca Ocağı* or Mine-Layers was more like a corps of engineers, traditionally being associated with the Mortar Corps. In 1774 Baron de Tott established a military engineering section specialising in pontoon bridges, and thereafter the *Lağımca Ocağı* got its best recruits from Bosnia and Albania. Sultan Selim continued expansion and reforms; the engineering school at Hasköy being enlarged with a modern curriculum and regular examinations for new and older members of the corps.

The central courtyard of the Baba Vida castle overlooking the River Danube at Vidin. The basic structure dates from the 13th-14th centuries, but was greatly strengthened in the later 18th and early 19th centuries. (Author's photograph)

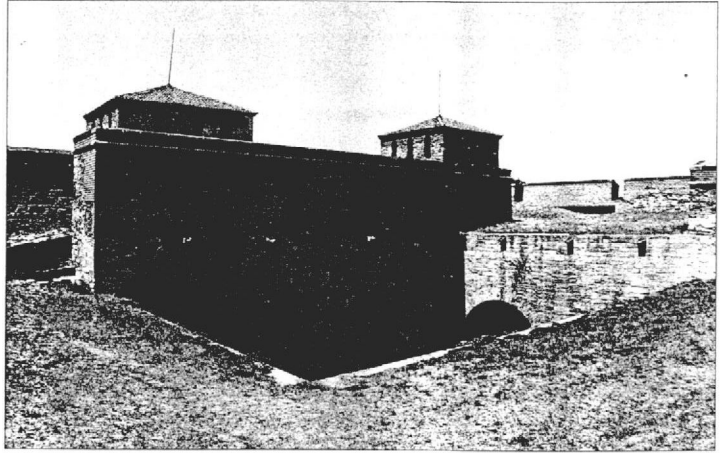
### Provincial Forces

The most important provincial troops were the *kapıhalkı* or armies raised by provincial governors. They included feudal troops such as Sipahis, as well as mercenaries, militias and tribal levies. By the 18th century all Muslim men in frontier regions were also liable for conscription as *azaps*; they were divided into fortress Azaps and naval Azaps according to the location of the province.

By the time of the Napoleonic Wars the greater part of the Ottoman Empire was, however, under the control of *ayans* offering allegiance, more or less, to the sultan. Some were members of long-established leading families, while others were 'new men'. In an attempt to retain their loyalty the sultan often gave them the rank of *seraskar* or commander of armies, but in many areas power was too fragmented for such inflated titles. Where local Janissaries and their Yamak auxiliaries seized control, their leaders were called *dahis*, but they rarely had as much authority as *ayans* did in other areas. Some places were ruled by local bandits whose leaders were known as *derebeyis*, or lords of the valleys. With their followers, they formed a vital source of troops when the rest of the Ottoman army was in disarray.

Balkan frontier areas often seem to have been more stable than interior provinces. Here a special local defence force of numerous, well-trained and highly motivated *serhat kulis* included cavalry and infantry based in small wooden *palanka* forts. Known as *haiduk* forts when held by Christian rebels, they consisted of ditches, earth ramparts, wooden palisades and corner towers, often with a larger wooden keep at the centre. Stakes could be thrust into the ditch, while thorny brushwood was grown on the outer face of the rampart. Elsewhere Muslim and Christian families served as *derbentçis* guarding mountain passes, bridges, ferries and main roads.

Such Balkan armies varied according to the availability of troops and the politics of the local leader. The governor of Rusokastro in Bulgaria, for example, had a motley guard of *seğban* (infantry), *deli* (cavalry), *tatar* (couriers) and *panduks*. Osman Paşa Pasvanoğlu of Vidin gathered discontented Janissaries and Yamaks from a wide area, along with



ex-Christian renegades and local irregulars. Ali Paşa of Janina recruited more widely, attracting Muslim and Christian soldiers from northern Greece, Albania and Macedonia but having little to do with the unreliable Janissaries. Following his capture of various French-held coastal enclaves, Ali Paşa also enlisted French prisoners-of-war to modernise his private army.

Yet it was a revival of armed Christian militias that was the most significant feature of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The main difference between Serbia and Bosnia was the Christian majority in Serbia and Muslim majority in Bosnia. In fact the Ottoman authorities encouraged the Serbs to help rebuild local defence systems, giving them the right to bear arms, form their own militias and help quell the turbulent Janissaries. These Serbian *Hayduk* units consisted of approximately 100 men under a *buljakhbasha* (from the Turkish, *bölükbaşı*) and became the first real Serbian army since the 15th century.

The situation in autonomous Wallachia and Moldavia was different. Here, the only large Ottoman garrisons had been in Bessarabia until this fell to the Russians. Instead the area was dominated by the *Boyars* or indigenous Romanian aristocracy rather than the *Fanariote* Greek *Hospodar* governors sent by the sultan. The Boyars had their own armed retinues, while the Hospodars had small military followings consisting of local recruits, Turkish and European mercenaries, renegades and some Janissaries. Local militiamen called *dorobanti* in Wallachia and *shujitori* in Moldavia had been known in earlier times and would become prominent again during the struggle for Romanian independence in 1829. The most effective troops were, however, recruited from *hayduk*

Early 19th century Albanian warriors dressed and equipped as volunteers rather than as Ottoman regular soldiers. (Engraving by J.B. Villiard, after a drawing by J.B. Hilair, Bib. Nat. Dep. d'Estampes, Paris, France)



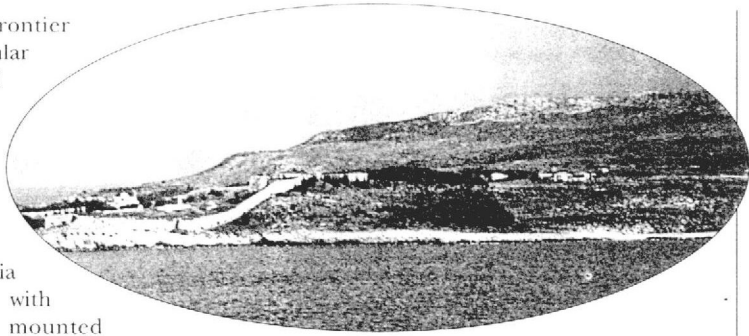
mountain bandits and frontier *pandurs* who formed an irregular local militia. In Craiova, capital of western or 'Little' Wallachia, the *pandurs* formed a regular garrison under a *spatari* or 'general', a second *pandur spatari* being based in Bucharest.

Provincial troops in Anatolia were again recruited locally with Kurdish 'musketeers' or mounted infantry being prominent in the south-east. In the north-east, Tayyar Paşa of Trabzon was a major military figure, who declared independence from the sultan after 1801 and built up his own army which included a modern artillery unit advised by two Russian deserters from Georgia. North-east of Tayyar's territory, the Ottomans had lost control over the Caucasus mountains, though many local Muslim leaders supported the sultan in the face of continuing Russian aggression. The princes of Kabartay on the northern slopes of the Caucasus, for example, claimed to have 30,000 warriors. The majority of these mountain warriors fought as infantry, but they included a cavalry élite sometimes armoured in a magnificently archaic manner.

The situation in Iraq was again different. The Paşa of Baghdad imported his own Georgian slave *mamluks* to maintain law and order and thus increase prosperity, while the fortifications of Baghdad were garrisoned by loyal Arab troops. This army defeated the fearsome Wahhabi raiders from central Arabia several times, although the Wahhabis did seize the Gulf coast province of al-Hassa in 1799. Further north, the Arab Banu Tayy of Mosul had for centuries been settled rather than nomadic, with a tribal army which had more in common with the neighbouring Kurds.

Ottoman Syria was fragmented between rival governing *paşas*. Irregular troops came from remarkably varied backgrounds. They included *Deli* cavalry, *Tüfenkci*, *Seğban* and *Levent* mounted infantry, plus Maghribi foot soldiers from North Africa. The number of soldiers in each *paşalık* tended to be small, ranging from 1,000 cavalry and 900 infantry to 300 horsemen and 100 foot soldiers. The *delis*, or *dalatiya* in Arabic, were recruited from both the Balkans and Anatolia, while *Seğbans* tended to come from Turkish Anatolia, and *Levents* or *Lawand* were largely Kurdish. The *Tüfenkci* were better disciplined, but small in number, while Maghribi North Africans from Libya, Tunisia and Algeria had the lowest military status. Some Syrian-Palestinian forces were equipped with a new form of camel-mounted swivel-gun like those of Moghul India.

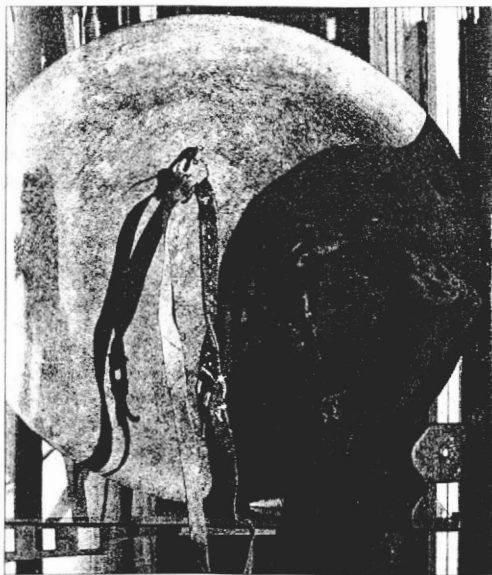
Local bedouin provided scouts armed with archaic matchlock muskets, while in an



The 17th century fortress dominating Vónitsa in western Greece remained in Venetian hands until, like other relics of the Venetian empire, it was annexed by the French in 1797. The following year Vónitsa was captured by Ali Paşa of Janina on behalf of the Ottoman sultan. (Author's photograph)

Kurdish tribal warriors of the Napoleonic era. In many respects Kurdish costume had more in common with those of the settled Arab peoples of Iraq and Syria, than with the Turks or bedouin. (Bib. Nat. Dep. d'Estampes, Paris, France)





Interior of a leather cavalry shield, probably dating from the 18th century. (Author's photograph: Museum of the Bektashi Dervish Order, Hacsi Bektaş, Turkey)

emergency the entire male population, Muslim, Christian and Jewish, could be called up to defend an area. Some cities also had the remnants of an urban Janissary force, and Aleppo had been famous for breeding carrier pigeons until Kurdish raiders destroyed the breeding stock in the late 18th century. Northern Syria differed in having a minority population of warlike Turcoman nomads who migrated to and fro across the Taurus Mountains. Local leaders in fragmented Lebanon were called *Zu'ama*, and their followers were described by an English visitor as 'of an independent turn of mind; all are armed from the age of boys, and are governed by their own Emirs, or Sheikhs, or Princes... They are all warriors, loving athletic exercise.' They included Christian Maronites who dominated the highlands of Mount Lebanon. The only comparable power in Lebanon were the Druzes who were similarly warlike. They were summoned to war in an ancient manner: heralds shouted from hilltops and their cry was passed from village to village.

These Druze mountain troops fought by skirmishing among rocks and bushes, laying ambushes by night, but rarely venturing into the lowlands. The *Mitwali* Shia Muslims of the Baqa'a valley and southern Lebanon were less warlike, but did include some horsemen. The Arab bedouin were a more peaceable people than the Turcoman and Kurdish nomads, mostly being involved in warfare as guides. They traditionally tried to settle all conflicts by negotiation, but when forced to fight their horsemen made one attack in small groups or as individuals, accepting the result of this single clash as victory or defeat. Their military traditions were designed to avoid excessive bloodshed in an environment where life was difficult enough already. An English traveller described these desert communities as hugely hospitable, preferring poetry and song to warfare, liking plunder but not bloodshed, getting angry only when hurt, and not being ashamed to retreat in the face of superior odds.

Ottoman Palestine served as the powerbase of some remarkable governors during the 18th century. One of them, Daher Ibn Umar, enlisted the bedouin who consequently acquired flintlock muskets and pistols to supplement their traditional matchlocks, javelins and bows. The Palestinians of Safad were also recruited as cavalry while the people of Nablus, Bethlehem and Hebron had a reputation for active resistance against oppressive rulers. By the 1780s Ahmet Cezzar Paşa of Acre maintained a larger number of better paid and equipped troops than any other in Syrian *paşa*, his élite cavalry again consisting of Bosnians and Albanians. Until his death in 1804, Ahmet Cezzar Paşa remained Napoleon's implacable foe and a friend of Britain. Ottoman authority in Arabia was confined to a few ports and the holy cities of Mecca and Medina which were under the control of the *Sharif* of Mecca. The Ottomans had lost all authority in Yemen, while on the western side of the Red Sea the Paşalık of Massawa in Eritrea was little more than a name. Here power was largely in the hands of the Christian Ethiopian

Ras, or governor, of Tigre many miles inland, though the Ottoman Paşa of Jiddah did supply a small garrison to defend Massawa itself.

The French conquest of Egypt was never complete, as the port of Qusayr never fell to the invaders. In 1800 Murad Bey, leader of the Mamluks in Upper Egypt, surrendered to the French but they failed to establish full control before being expelled by a British-Ottoman army. The largest number of Mamluks had been concentrated in Cairo, and in 1780 their forces reportedly consisted of some 10,000 cavalry with 2-3,000 *saraces* or assistants. A few years later another report put the number of young Mamluks under training and still with the status of slaves at around 8,500. Adult Mamluks were attached to the households of Mamluk leaders such as Ibrahim Bey, who had 600 men. In addition there were many independent Mamluks: some were freelance warriors, while others had come from extinct 'households'. Defeated households or political factions who had left Cairo were gradually absorbed into the Egyptian population. Civil wars between rival Mamluk households usually consisted of minor skirmishing with minimal casualties. Mamluk armies which campaigned outside Egypt tended to have fragile cohesion, collapsing into rival factions if their commander died or failed to achieve rapid success. On the other hand, the Mamluks were very highly trained and had recently adopted firearms, each man carrying a pair of long

BELOW, LEFT 18th century Ossetian warrior from the Caucasus mountains. His gun is protected from the weather by a leather or perhaps sheepskin covering. (Drawing by Beggrov, location unknown)

BELOW, RIGHT 18th century Chechen warrior. The Muslim Chechens successfully defended their independence until they fell under Russian domination in the mid-19th century. (Drawing by Beggrov, location unknown)



pistols and a short carbine or blunderbuss in addition to more traditional weaponry. The Mamluks imported their finest horses from central Arabia and no one except a Mamluk was permitted to ride a horse in Egypt, though the bedouin clearly did so in areas outside Mamluk control. Mamluk horse-harness was so old-fashioned as to be virtually medieval, being characterised by a heavy wood-framed saddle with a cantle which rose above the rider's hips, and a tall pommel. Stirrups were of the North African type with sharp corners instead of spurs. Bridles had a form of snaffle bit which could injure the animal if used ruthlessly but gave far more immediate control over the animal.

Military training took up virtually all a Mamluk's time, and almost every morning Cairo's Mamluks went to a large open area near the Citadel to practise on horseback with carbines, pistols, and sabres. Horse-archery was now a sport rather than a military exercise, as was throwing the *Jarid* or *Cint*. This was a heavy but blunt javelin which one horseman threw before fleeing while his opponent tried to avoid the first *Jarid* before pursuing with his own.

The Mamluks' *saraçis* – 'saddlers' – served as messengers, assassins or street brawlers. In addition some powerful Mamluk Beys enlisted foreign technicians and specialists such as artillerymen and armourers. The colourful Mamluks and their households were not, however, the only troops in Ottoman Egypt. Garrisons consisted of inexperienced and low-paid recruits including men listed as Janissaries,

*Yamaks*, *Azaps*, *Tüfenkis*, Mutafarriqa Mamluks of the Ottoman governor himself and Maghribi mercenaries, plus some Sipahi cavalry. Of these Janissaries and *Azaps* provided the Ottoman *wali* or governor with infantry, although they were also bitter rivals. The Janissaries had few officers of their own and Mamluks were increasingly taking control of what remained of this once-proud unit. The Sipahi cavalry were in an even worse state, though they theoretically still included *Jarakisa* or Circassian Sipahis, *Shawushiya* Sipahi 'sergeants', and *Jamaliya* 'volunteer' Sipahis. The *Tüfenkci* 'musketeers' and *Mutafarriqa* Mamluks of the Ottoman *wali* or governor were closely associated with these Sipahis, but in reality all had lost out to the Mamluks.

Meanwhile, Egypt's Arab tribes had gained military and political influence as Ottoman control declined. The Banu Habayiba, for example, were rich and virtually autonomous in parts of the Delta, while the Banu Hawarra enjoyed a similar position in southern Egypt. These Arab tribes were not nomads, but formed a rural aristocracy of landowners and farmers. Their status, however, was volatile and by 1779 the Banu Hawarra had declined almost to the level of peasants, while the Banu Habayiba increased their reputation as effective cavalry. Many were recruited into regular cavalry regiments and played a major role in the garrisons of Mecca, Medina

Murat Bey al-Kazduğli, one of the most powerful Mamluk leaders, under whose leadership Egypt gained almost complete autonomy from the Ottoman Empire. (From Description de l'Egypte, published in Paris 1809-25)





REGULAR CAVALRY

1: Deli cavalryman, early 19th century

2: Deli Bası cavalry officer from Syria

3: Tatar courier, early 19th century





#### MAMLUKS OF EGYPT

- 1: Mamluk officer in full armour, c.1795  
 2: Mamluk cavaryman, c.1798  
 3: Mamluk Bey or senior officer, c.1800  
 4: Child sword-bearer, c.1800

Amal N. Ghannam

THE TECHNICAL CORPS

- 1: Artillery Yüzbaşı, c.1815
- 2: Humbaracılar of the Mortar Corps, maintained by a Tınar or field
- 3: Mounted Artilleryman, c.1812
- 4: Pioneer of the Lâğımçı Corps, early 19th century



THE NIZAM-I CEDIT 'NEW ARMY'

- 1: Kolagası of the 1st Orta of Nizam-i Cedid Infantry, c.1806
- 2: Mülâzin Lieutenant of Nizam-i Cedid Infantry, c.1808
- 3: Nizam-i Cedid Neferi, c.1800
- 4: Neferi of the Nizam-i Cedid 2nd Orta 'provincial militia' c.1795



Aug. 1806



NAVY

1: Pasa Bas Çavusu senior naval officer,  
early 19th century

2: Levend naval rating, c.1800

3: Kalyoncu marine, early 19th century

4: Tershane Bas Çavusu of the Arsenal Guards,  
early 19th century



**BALKAN PROVINCIAL FORCES**

- 1: Albanian chieftain, early 19th century
- 2: Harambasa leader of Balkan Haydut irregulars, late 18th century
- 3: Wallachian boyar, c.1800
- 4: Bosnian Panduk, c.1775

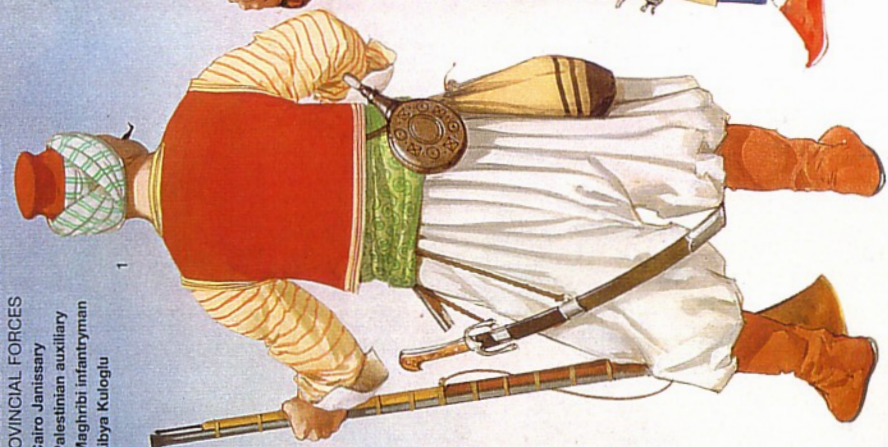
ANATOLIAN AND CAUCASUS  
PROVINCIAL FORCES

- 1: Anatolian Sipahi Cavalryman  
2: Circassian armoured cavalryman  
3: Armenian archer



MIDDLE EASTERN AND NORTH AFRICAN  
PROVINCIAL FORCES

- 1: Cairo Janissary
- 2: Palestinian auxiliary
- 3: Maghribi infantryman
- 4: Libya Kuloglu





and the Red Sea ports, particularly those of Egypt's new governor, Muhammad Ali, in the early 19th century.

The story of Muhammad Ali's new Egyptian army really belongs to the 19th century, yet it was rooted in the turbulent aftermath of the joint Ottoman-British reconquest in 1801. Some 5,000 troops remained with Hüsrev Paşa, the new Ottoman governor of Egypt, including a small force of modernised Nizam-ı Cedid infantry which soon recruited additional men in Egypt. Hüsrev Paşa tried to reduce the pay of those Albanians who had reconquered Egypt and instead raise a force of Egyptian Nizam-ı Cedid. Within months Muhammad Ali emerged as *Kaymakam* or commander of Ottoman forces in Egypt. Muhammad Ali next faced a threat from an unexpected direction when the Ottoman sultan's previous allies, the British, suddenly invaded Egypt. In 1807 General Mackenzie Fraser occupied Alexandria and pressed inland, forcing the Egyptians into active resistance. Outside Rashid (Rosetta) Britain suffered one of its most unexpected defeats at the hands of Muhammad Ali's motley army, and this virtually forced the Ottoman sultan to recognise him as Egypt's legitimate governor. Muhammad Ali then consolidated his position by massacring the Mamluk leadership in 1811, having already banned the importation of more military slaves into Egypt. Not all the Mamluks of Egypt were, of course, exterminated. Some accepted Muhammad Ali's victory and entered his service, but many more refused to recognise defeat and migrated into the Sudan, there to cause problems for years to come.

During these chaotic years Egypt was home to an astonishing variety of soldiers including Scottish captives taken at Rashid, German

**Mamluk on sentry duty.** The Egyptian Mamluks were widely considered to be the finest light cavalry to take part in the Napoleonic Wars. (Print from a drawing by Carle Vernet, Bib. Nat. Dep. d'Estampes, Paris, France)



engineers from the Tyrolean battalions of Napoleon's army, French soldiers who converted to Islam, Italians recruited for the American march against Tripoli in Libya, and Greek artillerymen left over from passing Ottoman armies. As Muhammad Ali's fame spread, many Albanian and perhaps Bosnian comrades from his early days as a *yol ağa* or 'road guardian' in Macedonia came to join him. As yet, however, Muhammad Ali had not taken the momentous step of conscripting the ordinary *Fallahin* peasantry of Egypt.

In North Africa the sultan had for years delegated authorities to the 'regencies' of Tripoli (Libya), Tunisia and Algeria, but in each case the Ottoman *paşas*, *bey*s, *deys* and governors controlled little more than a narrow coastal strip. The armies of each 'regency' differed. In Tripoli the senior officials included a guardian *baş* or chief of the palace, a *kahya* or *paşa*'s lieutenant, with a second *kahya* as assistant, five administrative ministers plus the *ağa* of Turkish soldiers and General of Arab cavalry, while the *paşa*'s eldest son was traditionally commander of the army as a whole. The *paşa* had an élite guard of *hampas* or black slave-soldiers armed with short blunderbuss muskets whose loyalty to the *paşa* verged on worship. There was also an outer guard of Turkish infantry and Mamluk cavalry. The Tripolitanian army also included some Janissary infantry and a numerous auxiliary cavalry, the best of whom were the *Kuloğlis*. They were the offspring of Janissary Turkish fathers and local Libyan mothers, and were mostly merchants and craftsmen who felt more akin to the indigenous Arabs or Berbers than the Turks.

Arab and Berber tribal auxiliaries may have numbered up to 10,000 horsemen and no less than 40,000 foot soldiers, though most were poorly armed. In contrast, the Janissaries and *Kuloğlis* of the Tripoli garrison were disciplined and skilled, fighting in an orderly manner under heavy American fire while religious leaders stood on top of the parapet reading from the Koran and hurling curses upon the enemy. The injured were taken to the *paşa*'s own apartments where they were tended by the *paşa*, his surgeons and slaves, their wounds being treated with honey which



ABOVE Egyptian Mamluks exercising on foot in the courtyard of Murat Bey al-Kazduğlı's palace. The exercise involved use of the *cirit* blunted javelin. (Aquatint by after a drawing by Luigi Mayer, Bib. Nat. Dep. of Prints and Drawings, Paris, France)



BELOW, LEFT Cairo Janissary infantryman. By the time of the French invasion these Janissaries and their Azap rivals had lost most of their military power to the Mamluks. (Engraving by N. Le Mire, after a drawing by J.B. Hilair, Bib. Nat. Dep. d'Estampes, Paris, France)

BELOW Arab tribal chief from Upper Egypt. Most formed a local landowning élite and would play a significant role in Muhammad Ali's creation of a new Egyptian army in the early 19th century. (English print, Bib. Nat. Dep. d'Estampes, Paris, France)



proved very effective. Soldiers who showed cowardice in the face of the enemy were obliged to dress as women and ordered to stay that way until they did something worthy of reinstatement. The worst punishment was, however, reserved for men convicted of abusing young prisoners of war. They were either beheaded or given a thousand strokes with a heavy cane, which was enough to kill. Efforts to modernise Tripoli's forces had some success and enabled Yusuf Karamanli to open up the trans-Saharan trade routes with an army of 30,000 infantry, 15,000 *Kuloğlı* cavalry and 30 field guns. To the south, the collection of Saharan oases collectively known as the Fezzan had in fact been under nominal Ottoman control several times.

The Paşa of Tunis also had a small but effective army, including Janissaries recruited directly from Anatolia, the Greek islands and the Balkans. Sometimes Janissaries on their way to neighbouring Algeria were persuaded to jump ship and join the Tunisians with offers of better pay, conditions and good weaponry imported from France. Only a small area around Algiers itself was under the direct rule of the *dey*, while the rest of nominal Ottoman territory consisted of three *Beyliks*. Nevertheless, the *dey* of Algiers remained the most powerful Ottoman representative in North Africa. He was elected by resident Janissary regiments, having officially taken over from the *paşa* back in 1711. In turn the *dey* was supported by a *haznaci*, or treasurer, a *mehalle-ağası*, or

supervisor of military camps, the *at-hijasi* who looked after *dey*'s own estates, a *bayt ulmaci*, or receiver of tribute, the *vekil harc*, or minister of marine, a chief *ağa* of the militia and auxiliaries, as well as other officials. The three *beys* of Oran in the west, Constantine in the east and Titeri inland from Algiers itself were vassals of the *dey* and had their own comparable military administrations.

The Algerian army consisted of Janissaries recruited from Ottoman subjects as well as renegade Czechs, Italians and Corsicans. Despite the fact that the supply of new recruits was drying up in the late 18th century, local inhabitants were strictly excluded. As in Libya, the Janissaries' main rivals were their own *Kuloğlu* offspring. Then there were Sipahi feudal cavalry who remained an effective force in this distant corner of the Ottoman Empire, indigenous urban *Baladi* or 'Moors' who played a major role in the navy, and Berber tribesmen, who provided large numbers of auxiliary cavalry. The *Zouaves* were also emerging as a separate infantry force led by officers with Berber names.

North African tactics were distinctly old-fashioned, with Maghribi cavalry approaching to within 500 metres of the enemy, forming the broadest possible front, then charging at full speed and firing a musket volley before stopping equally suddenly, wheeling around and withdrawing. In neighbouring Morocco, cavalry

practised such manoeuvres on the beach, three or four men charging or pursuing one another in an attempt to fire their gun under their opponent's horse. Weapons were otherwise similar to the Middle East, except that the Maghribi *flyssa* sabre was broader, straighter and often had a full guard around the grip.

## THE NEW ARMIES

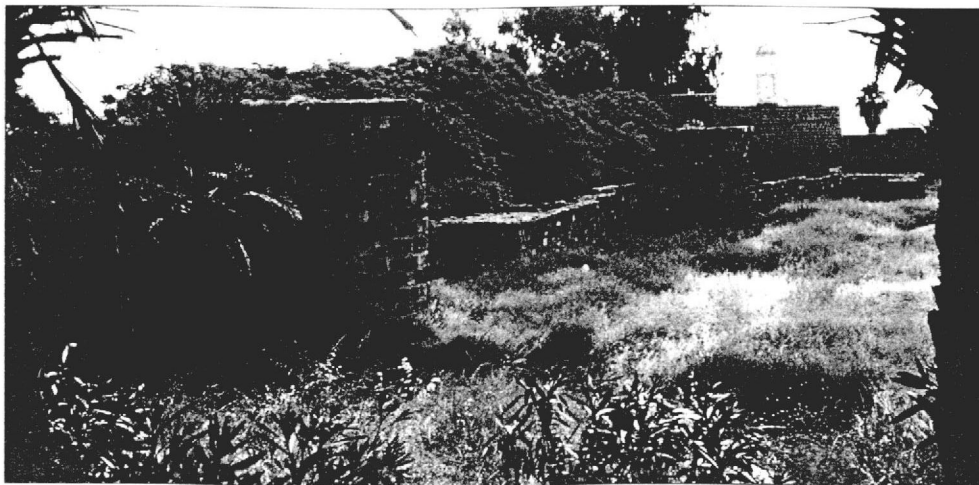
### Nizam-ı Cedit and Seğban-ı Cedit

The first 'westernised' infantry unit in the Ottoman army consisted of a small number of captives trained to perform Russian drills, who formed Koca Yusuf Paşa's guard while he was campaigning against the Russians in 1791. Once peace returned, Sultan Selim III saw Koca Yusuf's guard and was so impressed that he decided to establish a regiment along similar lines.

This was the first departure from the sultan's conservative policy of reforming Ottoman forces by returning the t $\ddot{o}$  an 'uncorrupted' state. Nevertheless, Selim set about things in a traditional manner, consulting a *mejlis-i meşveret* council of established experts. The result was the *Nizam-ı Cedit*, the 'New Army', which was a strange mixture of old and new. In some ways it was the last gasp of a dying military tradition, and in others it was the first Ottoman attempt to establish a co-ordinated modern army.

The first hundred Nizam-ı Cedit infantry were recruited from Istanbul's poor, with officers and drill masters drawn from Russian or German renegades. This regiment of 1794 was also 'camouflaged' in the hope of making it acceptable to the traditionalists by being attached to the old *Bostancı*-ı Hass elite infantry guard, and called the *Bostancı Tüfenkçisi*, or 'Bostancı musketeers'. Even so conservatives were antagonistic, while supporters maintained that in the Nizam-ı Cedit discipline was easier to enforce, and real uniforms made desertion difficult. Its rate

Most of the remaining fortifications of Tiberius in Palestine date from 1738 when the town was virtually rebuilt by the Druze 'prince' Tahir al-Umar. (Author's photograph)



of shooting was much greater than traditional infantry, and its cohesion meant that defeat was less likely to become a rout.

Numbers now increased rapidly, and new barracks were built at Levend Çiftlik, weapons and other equipment being imported from western Europe. Most officers from the new military technical schools went to the Nizam-ı Cedit where the first regiment had its own units of cavalry and artillery. Cavalry officers and NCOs were largely drawn from the sultan's existing horse guards, while Nizam-ı Cedit artillery largely came from the existing artillery corps. One out of every five men could return to their family for up to six months in winter, but there was heavy punishment for absence without leave or for late return, and no leave was permitted in summer. Pensions for those who retired ill or aged were half that of a man's pay, but if the soldier retired because of wounds or was a specially deserving case, he got full pay.

The Nizam-ı Cedit disciplinary system and internal structure was largely traditional, and promotion was strictly within the hierarchy, special promotion only being permitted in cases of proven ability on the battlefield. The officers of the first regiment consisted of a *binbaşı*, or colonel, the *ağa-yemin* (major of the right) and *ağa-yesar* (major of the left) each in charge of a *tabur*, or battalion. These were subdivided into 12 *bölük*, or companies, each led by a *bölükbaşı* or *yüzbaşı*, and into platoons under an *onbaşı*. Each *bölük* had one cannon with eight *topçı* (artillerymen), a *top ustası* (cannon master), five *arabaçı* (cannon wagoners), six *kullukçu* (orderlies) and various minor officials. The corps was also supported by a separate *İrad-ı Cedit* financial system largely drawing revenues from customs dues. Nizam-ı Cedit training was based on French military manuals, with the infantry drawn up in two or three lines to provide reserves and mutual support. Soldiers got their first uniforms on enlistment, new ones then being provided each year. Officers were, however, expected to pay for their own uniforms.

The success of this first Nizam-ı Cedit regiment and the French invasion of Egypt encouraged Sultan Selim to enlarge his New Army. Additional battalions were established outside Istanbul, while a rather different formation called the Second Regiment of Nizam-ı Cedit was also created. This was a provincial militia of mounted infantry to be based in Anatolia, recruited by loyal provincial governors, trained in the east by Nizam-ı Cedit officers and with a main base at Üsküdar, facing Istanbul on the eastern shore of the Bosphorus. Most recruits were Turkish peasants and their task was to maintain security in Anatolia. In an attempt to placate the conservatives, officers sent from Istanbul were called *Sancak Beye*s as if they were local feudal cavalry.

Although this horseman is described as a 'Cavalier Egyptian,' his costume, weaponry and facial features suggest that he is a Turcoman tribal warrior rather than a Mamluk. (Print of a drawing by Carle Vernet., Bib. Nat. Dep. d'Estampes, Paris, France)



By July 1801 only nine governors had been willing to raise local units. One of these was Abdurrahman Paşa of Karaman, who was made commander of the provincial Nizam-ı Cedid regiment. Of those recruits who did arrive in Üsküdar, half were trained as infantry, half as cavalry or mounted infantry. Efforts to extend the provincial Nizam-ı Cedid to the Balkan provinces failed since the sultan had even less authority in these regions. By the end of 1806 half the 25,000 officers and men of the Nizam-ı Cedid were still stationed in Istanbul, almost half in Anatolia with a handful in Bulgaria. They were praised by most western European observers, but rapid expansion had revived problems of morale, so training and discipline were intensified. Meanwhile, the success of the Nizam-ı Cedid may actually have encouraged conservative criticism. When Sultan Selim ordered conscription to be extended throughout the Balkans, opposition came to a head and from then on Selim's position was steadily eroded until he was overthrown in 1807.

When the Nizam-ı Cedid was used in combat, it proved itself effective. In 1799, for example, 200 Nizam-ı Cedid helped Ahmet Cezzar Paşa in his heroic resistance to Napoleon in Gaza. Between three and four hundred Nizam-ı Cedid infantry and artillerymen were also with him and Admiral Sir Sidney Smith during the successful defence of Acre. A third of the Ottoman force sent to help Britain expel the French from Egypt were also Nizam-ı Cedid and they played a leading role in the capture of Rashid. Thereafter, internal campaigns in the Balkans remained the New Army's primary role and the Nizam-ı Cedid played only a small part in resisting the Russian invasion of 1806-7.

Following the coup which toppled Selim III in 1807, the Nizam-ı Cedid was officially destroyed, though in reality most of its soldiers survived and a large proportion of its junior officers were out of harm's way with the main Ottoman army. Mustafa Bayraktar, Paşa of Ruse (Rusçuk) in Bulgaria, tried to continue the military reforms, firstly as Mustafa IV's Grand Vizier and later by engineering the removal of Mustafa in favour of Mahmut II. They tried to recreate the Nizam-ı Cedid, giving it the new name of *Seğban-ı Cedid* in the hope that by harking back to the ancient but



Libyan bedouin singing and dancing in the desert. These people were an important source of military recruits in North Africa, Egypt and Syria. (ex-R. Tully, *Narrative of Ten Years' Residence in Tripoli in Africa*, London 1817)



LEFT Sidi Hasan, the Bey or autonomous ruler of Tripolitania in Libya. His magnificent ceremonial court costume includes a *çelenk*, a 'wreath' or brooch given by the sultan in recognition of bravery and fastened to his turban. (ex-R. Tully, *Narrative of Ten Years' Residence in Tripoli in Africa*, London 1817)

The Nizam-ı Cedid of Sultan Selim III had been disbanded by the time Jeane Brindisi painted his Ottoman costume prints in the 1820s. Presumably he based this picture on illustrations he found during his visit to Istanbul. Left to right: *kalpaklı* or 'kalpak' hat-wearer, *şubara neferi* 'flank soldier', Nizam-ı Cedid *neferi* or ordinary infantryman, *şubara neferi* 'flank soldier'.



defunct *Seğban* regiments of Janissaries the conservatives would be fooled into acceptance. The corps was even to be financed via a new Ministry for the Holy War, but another revolt flared immediately the *Seğban-ı Cedit* made its first public appearance. Mustafa Bayraktar was killed; the short-lived new army disbanded with heavy loss of life, and no further fundamental modernisation was attempted until Sultan Mahmut II destroyed the Janissaries with even greater brutality in 1826.

While these unsuccessful attempts to create a modern Ottoman army were going on in the centre of the Empire, several provincial governors were creating their own smaller modernised units. Among them was Süleyman Paşa of Baghdad, who raised local *Nizam-ı Cedit* troops for his own purposes. The longer-lasting military reforms by Muhammad Ali of Egypt began after he returned from an expedition against the Wahhabis in Arabia in 1815. Firstly he put ex-French army officers supported by Mamluk and Greek NCOs in command of infantry units of African slaves imported via the Sudan. But this failed due to high mortality among the African soldiers. Placing French mercenary officers over Muhammad Ali's Turkish and Albanian troops similarly failed, and real modernisation had to wait until the Egyptian peasantry were conscripted several years later.

## THE NAVY

The Ottoman navy declined in the 18th century, decay and corruption beginning in the *Tersane-i Amire* or great Arsenal of Istanbul. As a result, the ships which went to war against Russia in the 1770s included huge vessels with excessively tall sterns, irregular armament and old-fashioned rigging. Leaky, structurally weak, and difficult to manoeuvre, they were manned by inexperienced sailors and untrained officers. The result was disaster.

Yet the virtual obliteration of the old navy made reform easier. This was led by Gazi Hasan, the new *Kapudan Paşa* or Grand Admiral, and subsequently Grand Vizier. He enlisted Western naval advisers to improve maritime technology and kept a naval reserve in Istanbul throughout the year, instead of dismissing the sailors in winter. Nevertheless, improvements were more obvious in the ships than their crews. An era of more fundamental reform began under Sultan Selim and his Grand Admiral Küçük Hüseyin Paşa; the results being more successful than those to the Army. Naval administration was reorganised along lines similar to those of the *Nizam-ı Cedit*. Conditions improved dramatically inside the ships and in 1806 a naval medical service was created under Italian guidance. The *Tersane-i Amire* was rebuilt with French advice in the 1790s, and warships were constructed under the guidance of French shipwrights. The largest was a ship-of-the-line called the *Selimiye* carrying 122 guns. Efforts were



Costume print by Jeane Brindisi. Left to right: *keçeli nefer* or 'vagabond' Janissary soldier; Nizam-ı Cedid *binbaşı*, major; *topçu başı* artillery officer; *binbaşı* of what is described as the 'new army of Sultan Mahmud II.' The last figure's costume looks much more like that of a Nizam-ı Cedid officer, so it is possible that the magnificent uniform in the centre is that of Mahmud II's new troops.

gunners and marines, sail-makers, skilled craftsmen, 'casual workers' taken aboard when needed, and men who may have been specialist swimmers such as those in the medieval Byzantine navy. The best sailors were Greeks and North Africans, though Selim's reforms meant that all coastal peoples became liable for conscription into the fleet.

A new corps of marines was established in 1804, modelled on the Nizam-ı Cedid. It was commanded by a *tüfenkçi kapudani* and consisted of 1,000 men in two naval regiments, each under a *tüfenkçi kapudani mülazım*. Pay and promotion was the same as in the Nizam-ı Cedid, and any naval commander in charge of three or more ships had to be accompanied by a marine officer. The vital Danube river fleet was similarly modernised following the war with Russia in 1812. The fleets of Tripoli (Libya), Tunis and Algiers were generally better handled than those of the sultan himself, and of these the Algerian was the most important. It was commanded by a chief *rais* or admiral, each ship having a *rais* (captain) and *topçu bahri*, a senior naval gunner who took command in battle. Most of its warships were built locally, though some were captured from Christian rivals. The Algerian fleet had, however, declined in relation to Christian European fleets, largely because it continued to rely on small, fast and manoeuvrable but lightly armed *xebecs*. In 1811 Muhammad Ali of Egypt asked Britain for permission to buy small

also made to revive shipyards in other parts of the Ottoman Empire.

The *Kapudan Paşa* was responsible for the fleet, the arsenal in Istanbul, and those in other ports, while the fighting fleet was headed by the *Kapudane-i Hümayun*, or Imperial Admiral. Beneath him were *reis* (admirals), *patrona-i hümayun* (vice-admirals), *riyale-i hümayun* (rear-admirals), *kapudane* (captains) in grades according to their ship, and various *Mülazım* 'assistants'. Improving the quality of such officers proved difficult. Corruption was rife, many officers had less knowledge of navigation than their men, and some warships never ventured out of sight of land. Crews consisted of *Çıplak* and *Levent* sailors, *kürekçiler* (oarsmen) for galleys, *kalyoncular*, or 'galleon men' who seem to have served as



The *Kapitan Paşa* or Grand Admiral Gazi Hasan Cezayirli with his pet lion. The ships in the background still have the tall carved sterns characteristic of Ottoman warships before the late 18th century reforms. (Engraving from a drawing by Cassas, Bib. Nat. Dep. d'Estampes, Paris, France)



warships in Bombay, but was refused on the grounds that Britain did not want a revival of Ottoman naval power in the Red Sea.

Despite all these difficulties, the Ottoman navy saw many actions during the Napoleonic Wars and won several engagements. The reformed fleet fought the Russians and Austrians to a draw by 1792, and in 1798 the Danube fleet enabled Grand Admiral Hüseyin Paşa to defeat Osman Pasvanoğlu Paşa of Vidin. But the Ottoman navy's greatest success came in alliance with its traditional Russian foes and its new British allies in 1800-01. A small squadron co-operated with the British off the Syrian coast, while the main fleet joined the Russians in expelling Napoleon's garrisons from the Ionian islands.

## GLOSSARY

Ahdname	pact conferring vassal status
Alaybayı	cavalry colonel which normally indicated a senior provincial administrator
Armatole	Balkan Christian militia
Ayan	Muslim provincial 'notable' or petty ruler
Azap	garrison regiment
Bey	ruler or governor
Beyleybey	(Bey of Beys) and Mirmiran indicating a governor-general ranking beneath a Vizier or government minister
Bölük	squad
Çelenk	jewelled decoration awarded by sultan for bravery
Çerisürücü	military policeman
Dahi	leader of a unit of Yamak auxiliaries
Deli	cavalry
Dorobantci	frontier guardsman of low status
Haydut	Balkan bandit
Hisarlis	assistants to garrison artillery



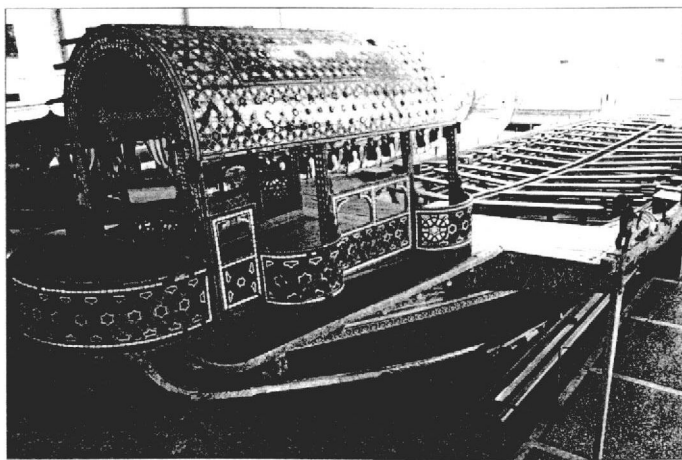
Costume print by Jeane Brindisi.  
Left to right: *çirak esnaf*, new recruit to the Janissary corps; *usta*, junior officer or NCO of the Janissary corps; *kalyoncu*, sailor aboard a large warship; *tulumbacı*, fireman from the Janissary corps.

Hospodar	autonomous ruler of Moldavia or Wallachia
Kapıkulu	salaried regular troops
Kapıhalkı	army raised by provincial governor
Kırdzhalı	locally recruited Muslim policeman
Klepht	Greek bandit
Maashlı	salaried Ottoman soldier
Millet	non-Muslim autonomous community
Morluk	bandit
Oçak	corps
Orta	regiment
Seğban	infantry
Siratkuhu	troops raised by provincial governors
Subaşı	disciplinary officer or policeman
Timar	fief
Topraklı	unpaid irregular troops
Tüfenk	musket
Tuğ	horsetail banner
Yamak	Janissary auxiliary
Yürük	Turkish nomad considered part of the military establishment.

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This *Kadirga* is the oldest surviving galley in Europe. It is believed to have been one of the Ottoman sultan's state barges and probably dates from the late 18th or early 19th centuries. (Deniz Müze Naval Museum, Istanbul, Turkey; Author's photograph)



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LEFT Officers of the sultan's palace guards relaxing. This illustration dates from around 1815 and shows the great variety of uniform headgear worn by Ottoman soldiers and their officers. (ex-R. Tully, *Narrative of Ten Years' Residence in Tripoli in Africa*, London 1817)

RIGHT Mamlūk officers watch an Egyptian puppet show. This illustration from around 1815 shows the huge difference in dress between the higher ranks of society, with their multiple layers of tunics, cloaks and turbans, and the poorest people who often wore little at all. (ex-R. Tully, *Narrative of Ten Years' Residence in Tripoli in Africa*, London 1817)

# THE PLATES

## A REGULAR CAVALRY

**A1: Deli cavalryman, early 19th century** By the late 18th century *Deli* volunteer cavalry were found in most provinces and formed the Ottoman Empire's most numerous cavalry force. They had no uniform but were generally identified by tall black felt hats. They acquired weaponry wherever they could and rode what Western observers often described as 'English saddles' as distinct from the almost medieval Mamluk saddles. Nor was their equipment as magnificent or decorated as that of their Mamluk rivals. This man has been given a captured Russian carbine and English pistols.

**A2: Deli Basi cavalry officer from Syria** This officer has adopted the costume of the province where he is stationed, but he still wears the typical tall black hat. The padded fabric top of this hat seems to have been an indication of rank and enabled men to identify their leaders more easily. The broad waist sash to carry weapons had an ancient history in the Middle East, and was very comfortable in hot climates. The broad cummerbund beneath this sash also gave support when riding long distances.

**A3: Tatar courier, early 19th century** Similarity between the headgear of the courier corps and that of the *Delis* suggests they may have been associated. Though described as Tatars they were recruited from many sources. The loose 'gaiters' around his ankles may reflect a steppe heritage. This man has been given a decorated *Yatağan* short reverse-curved sword and a Turkish pistol. He is also carrying a *saz*.

## B MAMLUKS OF EGYPT

**B1: Mamluk officer in full armour, c.1795** Egyptian Mamluks occasionally wore armour, though this may only have been for parade purposes. Most armour was in Persian rather than Ottoman style. This man wears Arab-Egyptian costume suited to his homeland, and is characterised by the magnificence typical of the Mamluk élite; the number of weapons carried by many Mamluks was part of their mystique.

**B2: Mamluk cavalryman, c.1798** Even without armour, the fully equipped Mamluk was a magnificent sight. Bright red trousers became a sort of unofficial uniform, though not every Mamluk wore them, and they were later adopted by light cavalry in several armies. More specific to the Mamluks themselves was a heavy blunderbuss, preferably of English manufacture, which could be a devastating short range cavalry weapon.

**B3: Mamluk Bey or senior officer c.1800** Rank or status was indicated by the quality and magnificence of a man's costume and by the wearing of ornaments. The spontoon-like weapon appears in several sources and was another sign of rank. This aged officer is also armed with a long Caucasian dagger and the very curved sabre characteristic of both Mamluk and Persian cavalry.

**B4: Child sword-bearer, c.1800** The entire Mamluk system was based on slavery with only those of first-generation slave origin being eligible for the highest military ranks. This élite was, however, recruited from European peoples, and slaves of African origin could only hope to rise in civilian society. The tuft of hair left on top of an otherwise shaved head was basically a Turkish tradition, although it was adopted throughout much of the Muslim world.

## C THE TECHNICAL CORPS

**C1: Artillery *Yüzbaşı*, c.1815** This *yüzbaşı*, roughly equivalent to a captain, was distinguished by a pair of ornate 'buttons' on the breast of his coat. During the reforming reign of Sultan Mahmud II Ottoman artillery uniforms changed several times, and the precise date on any particular version is difficult to specify. Generally, the changes showed a trend away from Ottoman Turkish tradition towards Balkan fashions. It is also interesting to note that this man carries his sabre on a shoulder baldric rather than a waist-belt.

**C2: Humbaracılar of the Mortar Corps, maintained by a *Timar* or *fief*** Many members of the Humbaracılar corps of mortar gunners were supported by fiefs confiscated from members of the Sipahi cavalry, while others were paid directly by the government, but whether this was indicated by differences in dress seems doubtful. The uniform of the Humbaracılar was based upon the traditional costume of Bosnia which included a version of the tall black hat worn by *Deli* cavalrymen. The curved *Yatağan* was also used throughout the Balkans and may even have originated there.

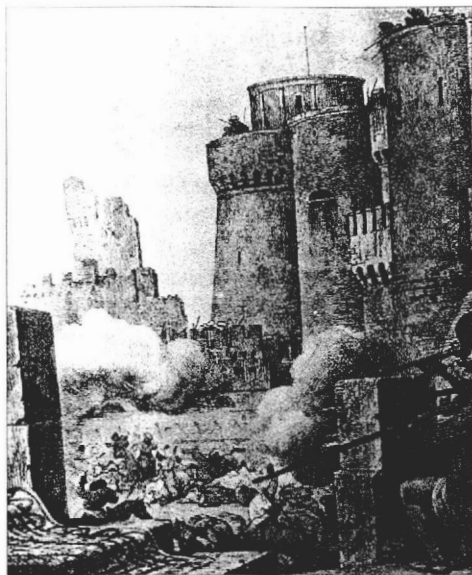
**C3: Mounted artilleryman, c.1812** Sultan Mahmud II's mounted artillery were an élite force, but were given sufficiently traditional uniforms to appease conservatives in Ottoman society. This included the coats with long false-sleeves worn since the 15th century at least, and loose gaiters comparable to those worn by the Tatar courier corps.

**C4: Pioneer of the *Lâğımçı* Corps, early 19th century** Though forming one of the technical corps, the *Lâğımçı* rarely looked very impressive in the sources. This particular individual is smoking a *nargile* water-pipe, often called a 'hubble-bubble' by Westerners. More critical observers maintained that Ottoman troops spent a great deal of their time smoking and drinking coffee.

## D THE NIZAM-ı CEDİT 'NEW ARMY'

**D1: Kolagasi of the 1st Orta of Nizam-ı Cedit Infantry, c.1806** The title *kolağası*, roughly equivalent to a senior lieutenant, reflected Sultan Selim III's attempt to appease the





The massacre of senior Mamlūk officers and Beys by Muhammad Ali's Albanian infantry in the courtyard of Cairo's Citadel, in 1811. (Lithograph from a painting by Joseph Vernet after a sketch by Forbin)

conservatives. It meant 'chief of slaves in the Sultan's service' though the word *kol* had long since ceased to mean 'slave' in a literal sense. His uniform is relatively simple with the minimum of weapons, and was only distinguished from that of his men by gold braiding.

**D2: Mülâzin lieutenant of Nizam-ı Cedit Infantry, c.1808**

This figure is based on an illustration which may show ceremonial or parade uniform. It includes abundant gold braiding, and the blue cuffs may indicate regiment or battalion. The tall red cap was based upon that of the traditional Bostancı Corps, itself affiliated to the Janissaries, and was a sop to conservative opinion. Nevertheless, the rest of this uniform incensed traditionalists who considered it almost indecently tight fitting.

**D3: Nizam-ı Cedit Neferi, c.1800** Much to the annoyance of the British ambassador, the first Nizam-ı Cedit regiment was issued with French rather than English muskets, but the piece of equipment which caused most problems for traditional Ottoman forces was the bayonet. It was seen as reducing a proud individual warrior to the status of a mere cog in a fighting machine, and only the Nizam-ı Cedit were prepared to use them.

**D4: Neferi of the Nizam-ı Cedit 2nd Orta 'provincial militia', c.1795** The second Nizam-ı Cedit *orta* or regiment operated as mounted infantry rather than line-infantry like the first *orta*. Their uniforms were much the same, though mid-blue instead of red. The small red cap shown in some pictures may also have been more practical on horseback than the tall and even floppier Bostancı hat.

## E NAVY

**E1: Pasa Bas Çavusu senior naval officer, early 19th century** The proud heritage of the Ottoman navy was reflected in the striking costumes adopted by officers and men. This included abundant gold and silver embroidery on most garments including trousers. Otherwise there was no uniform as such, and rank seems to have been indicated by the abundance and quality of this decoration. Ottoman naval personnel were also illustrated carrying what looked like white blankets, perhaps as a protection against the weather.

**E2: Levend naval rating, c.1800** Traditionally there had been strict separation between fighting men and virtually non-combatant sailors aboard Ottoman warships. Whereas the former were Muslims, the latter were largely drawn from Christian coastal peoples. But towards the close of the 18th century, as Turkish coastal peoples were registered as naval recruits, these distinctions tended to disappear. The heavy hooded coat worn by this sailor is clearly a weatherproof garment.

**E3: Kalyoncu marine, early 19th century** *Kalyoncu* or 'galley men' appear in several sources and tend to be almost piratical in their appearance. Whether they included gunners as well as marines is, however, unclear. Like sailors everywhere they often decorated their bodies with tattoos. This man also carries an unusual straight-bladed form of *Yatağan*.

**E4: Tershane Bas Çavusu of the Arsenal Guards, early 19th century** Of all the changes made to the Ottoman Empire's military system during the Napoleonic period, those in the great naval dockyard on the northern side of the Golden Horn were the most dramatic. Yet they involved technology and administration rather than uniforms which remained remarkably traditional. This man's cummerbund is apparently made from overlapping strips of leather, and looks similar to the abdominal supports worn by weight-lifters, perhaps symbolising the heavy labour characteristic of the Tershane.

## F BALKAN PROVINCIAL FORCES

**F1: Albanian chieftain, early 19th century** During the early 19th century the exotic Balkan costumes caught the imagination of western European artists and writers. None were more magnificent than those of the Albanians. The appearance and indeed the weaponry of the élite were highly decorated, and the Muslims generally carried more weaponry than the Christians. In fact non-Muslims were theoretically barred from bearing arms at all.

**F2: Harambasa leader of Balkan Haydut irregulars, late 18th century** Muslim and Christian *Haydut* or *Haiduks* living in the hills preyed on the towns and villages below, but also provided local powers with many of their best troops. The man shown here is a Christian bandit. He wears a *Toke* jacket decorated with embossed silver plates and embroidery, a feature of *Haydut* leaders. His pistol is a Balkan weapon, his enormous musket Turkish, while his sword has been taken from an Austrian infantry officer.

**F3: Wallachian boyar, c.1800** The indigenous Boyar aristocracy of Wallachia and Moldavia were described as wearing Ottoman Turkish costume except for tall lambskin *Kalpak* hats instead of turbans. This hat was itself of steppe origin from north of the Black Sea. The Boyars also dominated the Principalities and many of them maintained close

links with the neighbouring Russian Empire. In fact this Wallachian carries a Russian cavalry sabre.

**F4: Bosnian Panduk, c.1775** Unlike *Haydut* bandits, the *Panduks* or *Pandurs* were largely recruited from ex-soldiers. Many had experience in Austro-Hungarian or Russian ranks while others were ex-Ottoman regulars. This man's hat suggests that he had been a member of the Turkish *Bostancis*. In it he has a jewelled *çelenk* awarded for outstanding courage. In addition to his Balkan *Yatağan*, pistols and decorated musket, he is armed with an Italian straight-sword purchased on the Adriatic coast.

## G ANATOLIAN AND CAUCASUS PROVINCIAL FORCES

**G1: Anatolian Sipahi cavalryman** Though called Sipahis, the early 19th-century cavalry of that name was a new force of regular rather than feudal horsemen, though they seem to have operated more like mounted infantry than pure cavalry. It is unclear to what extent they had a uniform in the true sense of the word, although their simple costume and the distinctive headgear would influence the uniforms of Ottoman and Egyptian cavalry later in the 19th century. The long-stemmed tobacco-pipe was a prized possession of many Ottoman soldiers during this period.

**G2: Circassian armoured cavalryman** The Caucasus was perhaps the only part of Europe where full cavalry armour was still worn in battle; men equipped in this manner appeared in Russian as well as Ottoman irregular forces. The armour itself, like this man's weapons, was made locally as the Caucasus region remained a centre of traditional arms manufacture until the 20th century.

**G3: Armenian archer** This Armenian tribal infantry archers reliance on an archaic form of composite bow was as old-fashioned as the Circassian's armour. The wearing of generally muted colours or black became a tradition in Armenia and Georgia, perhaps as a result of centuries of Ottoman sumptuary laws which tried to reserve brighter costume for the ruling Turkish élite.

## H MIDDLE EASTERN AND NORTH AFRICAN PROVINCIAL FORCES

**H1: Cairo Janissary** The Janissaries of Cairo were regarded as Turks by Arab Egyptians, but their costume had little in common with that of traditional Janissary regiments. The flat, almost table-shaped hat seems to have been characteristic of these particular Janissaries, and the man in this illustration has also been given an old-fashioned *Jazayl* matchlock musket of the kind used throughout much of the Arabian peninsula. The large leather waterflask on his hip had been a feature of Egyptian troops since the early Middle Ages.

**H2: Palestinian auxiliary** Like the traditional costume of Syria, that of Palestine was a mixture of Arab bedouin and Turkish elements. During the late 18th century Palestine also asserted a distinct identity, while remaining one of the most loyal parts of the Ottoman Empire. This man's green turban indicates that he is a *Haji* who has been on pilgrimage to Mecca. Such men served as auxiliary infantry and cavalry to maintain local law and order; many also resisting the French invasion of 1799.

**H3: Maghribi infantryman** The tribal people of North Africa were among the poorest and most backward in the Ottoman Empire. Perhaps for this reason they were attracted to Egypt and Syria where they were recruited as infantry. European observers described them as remarkably poorly equipped, with generally rusty weapons.

**H4: Libya Kuloğlu** The Kuloğlu claimed descent from Turkish fathers and local Maghribi women. They formed an influential military group within Ottoman North Africa, basically serving as auxiliary cavalry though they were also effective on foot. Like the Mamluks of Egypt, many *Kuloğlu* were armed with blunderbusses; a weapon also issued to the bodyguards of the *Beys* of Tripoli among others.

**Captured Ottoman troops during the disastrous Battle of Abu Qir. The accuracy of their costume shows that the artist must have used sketches made during or after the battle. (Detail of a painting by General Lejeune; Musée de Versailles, France)**

